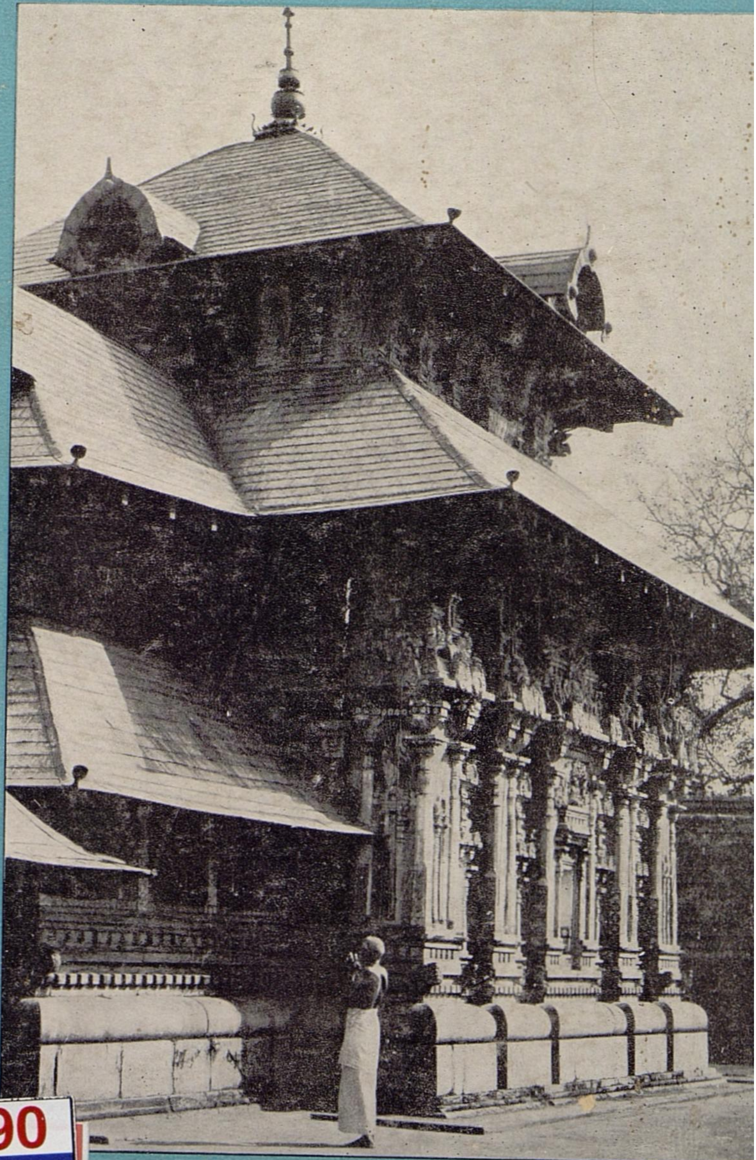
MONUMENTS OF
KERALA



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MONUMENTS OF KERALA

by

H. SARKAR

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MONUMENTS OF KERALA

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

KERALA OCCUPIES A NARROW STRIP OF LAND, NOT more than 555 km in length, on the western seaboard of peninsular India, roughly between the latitudes of 8°17′ and 12°47′N. Washed by the Arabian Sea on the west and the hill-ranges of the Western Ghats on the east it has the maximum width of only 120 km (fig. 3). Geographically, its length covers most of the Malabar coast; and the name Malabar seems to have some association with Malaināḍu ('land of hills') of the medieval Tamil writers. The term Malayalam, the indigenous word for denoting the country, appears to be the compound of two words *malai* ('mountain') and *āḻam* ('depth').

In ancient times, the country was known as Kerala or alternatively, as the land of the Cheras. The second rock-edict of Aśoka (*circa* 273-36 B.C.) refers to Kerala-putras along with the Choḻas, Pāṇḍyas and Satiyaputras (perhaps the Atiyamāns of the Koṅgu region) as the border kingdoms of the Maurya empire. In the first century A.D., Pliny, the Roman historian, refers to the rulers of Kerala as Caelobothras, while the unknown author of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, of the same period, mentions it as Cerobothra. During this period Muziris, generally identified with Cranganur (Kodungallur), District Trichur, was the most important of the several ports of the west coast, frequented by

foreign ships, laden with merchandise. Ptolemy, the geographer of the second century, mentions the country as Kerobothros. In the contemporary Tamil literature, Kerala is invariably referred to as the Chera country, and there is ample evidence to show that the Cheras rose to prominence along with the Cho̤las and the Pāṇḍyas during the first three centuries of the Christian era.

The history of the Cheras during the pre-Christian times is, however, still in darkness. Some glimpses of this people are preserved in the earliest available strata of the Tamil literature but these references may not go beyond the first to the third centuries A.D. According to the widely-accepted view, it was Udiyañjeral, who founded, in about A.D. 130, the first Chera dynasty, which ruled over parts of Kerala for about hundred years or so. It was a period of brisk Roman trade that brought economic prosperity to the Chera country. Two other lines of rulers also enjoyed independent position within the present political boundary of Kerala: they were the Āy chieftains—the Aioi of Ptolemy—and the Na̤n̤a̤ṇas of E̤lil-malai or the Mount D'Eli of the European writers, in north Malabar. The Āy chieftains, who claimed their descent from the Yādavas, ruled over the southern part of Kerala including parts of the present District Kanyakumari.

The Cheras occupied a large territory, which included at some stage the Koṅgu country (Salem and Coimbatore region). Its capital was Vañji, also known as Karūr. There is, however, no unanimity about its location as it has been identified variously with

Thiruvanchikulam, near Cranganur (Kodungallur), Karurapadna, near Cranganur, both in Kerala, Karur, near Tiruchchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, and so on. It is worth noting that the only archaeological evidence of the early Cheras comes from a rock-shelter at Pugalur, near Karur, District Tiruchchirappalli, which incidentally produced several hoards of Roman coins ranging in dates from A.D. 37 to 180. Of the four rock-shelters here, the most important one has on its façade, just below the drip-line, two Chera inscriptions of about the second century A.D. They mention three successive Chera rulers—Ko Ātaṉ Chel Irumpoṟai, Peruṅ-Kaḍuṅgoṉ, and Iḷaṅ-Kaḍuṅgoṉ, besides the fact that the rock was cut for Cheṅkāyapan, a Jaina monk, by the grandson of Ko Ātaṉ Chel (or Cheral) Irumpoṟai. One of the inscriptions of the second century A.D. near the beds also refers to a goldsmith from Karu-ūr, this being the earliest epigraphical reference to the name of the Chera capital.

Not much is known about the Cheras in the period from the fourth to the end of the eighth centuries. The period known as the Kaḷabhra interregnum in south Indian history might have extended to Kerala as well. From this historical twilight emerged the Chālukyas of Badami, the Pallavas of Kāñchī and the Pāṇḍyas of Madurai, all of them bringing about the discomfiture of the Kaḷabhras in the sixth century. More than one ruler of these dynasties claimed victory over the Cheras but perhaps these invasions had hardly any lasting effect on the political situation dominated mostly by petty chieftains.

There are inscriptional evidences to show that the Pāṇḍyas got embroiled into long-drawn conflict with the Āys in the seventh century. None the less, the Pāṇḍyas, under Raṇadhīra (*c.* A.D. 700-730) and Rājasiṁha I (730-65) kept the Āy chiefs under firm grip for some time and this paved the way for various architectural activities. All the cave-temples in the southern part of Kerala were excavated in this period (below pp. 19-25). Once again the Āys asserted their independence in the latter half of the eighth century, only to invite successive Pāṇḍya inroads into their territory. Of the Āy rulers, Karunanḍadakkaṉ (857-80) and Vikramāditya Varaguṇa (880-925) must have enjoyed a spell of undisturbed peace. The Āy rule was not destined to survive long, and after the death of Vikramāditya Varaguṇa it collapsed in the face of Chera resurgence.

The Cheras re-established themselves in about A.D. 800 under Kulaśekharavarmaṉ, who was none else than Kulaśekhara Āḻvār, a leading figure in the history of the Vaishṇava movement in the south. He had his capital at Mahodayapuram or Thiruvanchikulam and ruled for about twenty years. His successor Rājaśekharavarmaṉ, also known from an inscription, was a devout Śaiva; as a matter of fact, he has been identified with the Śaiva saint Cheramān Perumāḷ Nāyanār. Both Kulaśekharavarmaṉ and Rājaśekharavarmaṉ are taken to be contemporaries of the great Advaita philosopher Śaṅkarāchārya.

The second Chera dynasty, also known as the Kulaśekharas, ruled over different parts of Kerala till about A.D. 1102. More than a dozen kings, known mostly

from their inscriptions, ascended the Chera throne. Under Kodai Ravivarmaṉ (*c.* 917-44) their suzerainty extended over the whole of Kerala; even the Āy territory was included in his empire. This political situation drew the Cheras on the brink of conflict with the Choḻas, who had also staged a revival under Vijayālaya in *circa* A.D. 850. At the beginning, the relation of the two ancient dynasties was one of friendship and cordiality. One of the Chera monarchs gave his daughter to Parāntaka I (907-55), the son of Āditya I (871-907) in marriage. But the policy of aggrandizement pursued by Kodai Ravivarmaṉ developed strained relations between them. It did not erupt into an open conflict because of the death of Parāntaka, who was followed by a number of weak rulers on the Choḻa throne.

The revival of the Chera power on the west coast brought in its trail political equilibrium and economic prosperity. Once again the ports of the Chera country were busy with foreign traders and ships. This time the Arab world and China came by way of maritime activities and trade closer to the Malabar coast. A great stabilizing factor in the realm of trade was the participation of the Christian and Jewish merchant communities of Kerala. It is, therefore, natural that the eyes of the Imperial Choḻas would turn towards the west coast. Their aim was to have control of the foreign trade, and to plunder wealth amassed in course of favourable balance of trade. Thus Rājarāja I (985-1016) lost no time in launching successive military expeditions against the Chera monarch Bhāskara Ravivarmaṉ I (*c.* 962-1020). Undoubtedly it shattered the Chera

prestige but resistance was firm and consistent. This Chera-Choḻa conflict has sometimes been termed as the hundred years war of the history of Kerala.

Rājendra Choḻa (1012-1044), son and successor of Rājarāja, took the imperialist policy of his father to its natural culmination. In his sixth regnal year he attacked Kerala: both his navy and infantry went in action to pound the capital Mahodayapuram. Rājendra's victory was decisive. The heart of the Chera country was no doubt shaken to the core, but the subjugation of the Cheras remained far from reality. In the latter part of his reign his son Rājādhirāja (1018-1054) had to be deputed to quell a rebellion in Kerala. The struggle continued till the last days of the Kulaśekharas when Rāmavarma Kulaśekhara, who stood valiantly against the invasion of Kulottuṅga Choḻa I (1070-1122), shifted the capital from Mahodayapuram to Kollam or Quilon. The event signalled the end of the Kulaśekhara empire and the emergence of Veṇāḍu as an independent power with its own line of rulers founded by the same Rāmavarma Kulaśekhara. Despite numerous invasions and political vicissitudes it continued to hold its sway over parts of south Kerala till the time of the merger of the major part of Travancore state in 1956 with the present Kerala.

Contemporary to the Cheras was the Mūshika dynasty of the Eḻil-malai region in north Malabar. One prince Vikramarāma of this dynasty saved the famous monastery at Mūlavāsa from erosion of the sea. It is noteworthy that the Kolātiri Rājās of Koḷattunāḍ were the later representative of the Mūshika family.

The unification of Kerala under the second Chera dynasty represented a short-lived victory of the centripetal forces over the centrifugal ones. So, with the disappearance of the central authority in the beginning of the twelfth century, the minor principalities once again asserted their full independence. In the meanwhile, a new factor had emerged in the Kerala politics: the rise of the Nambūdiri Brahmins as the real lever of power. In fact, they created an independent theocratic state within each principality.

It has to be borne in mind that the resources of Malabar did not depend merely on land because it had the unique advantage of having a profitable external trade based on spices. The chieftains who controlled the important ports had an edge over others in spheres of political prestige and economic stability. Before the arrival of the Portuguese, in 1498, three chieftains, because of their control over the ports responsible for handling the bulk of exported cargo, spread their vague suzerainty over the neighbouring chieftains. They were the Veṇāḍu ruler in the south, the Zamorin of Calicut in central Kerala and the Kolatīri Rājā on the north.

The Zamorin of Calicut had the required power and resources to bring about the unification of Kerala. As a port, Calicut ranked foremost on the west coast shipping the bulk of pepper, cardamom, cinnamon and ginger. Moreover, traders from the Arabian peninsula, who monopolized the external trade, were deeply entrenched there. The Zamorin, then the richest king of India, had contacts with the Arab countries, Egypt and

beyond. In spite of all these advantages, the Zamorin failed to pursue a vigorous policy for the unification of his country. The main reason for it was the arrival of the Portuguese on the Indian waters.

The rise of Cochin in the fifteenth century is due to the combination of some new factors. After the flood of 1341 in the Periyar river, the importance of Cranganur as a port was on the decline. The very flood created the Cochin harbour, thereby offering natural protection to ships during monsoon. In about 1405, the Cochin royal house shifted its capital from Mahodayapuram to Cochin as a precaution against the aggressive designs of the Zamorin. By that time the importance of Cochin as a port was also realized. The king of Cochin, a Kshatriya by caste, had no right, as per the social usage, to wear the crown, mint coins and hold ceremonial umbrellas over his head. On the other hand, all these royal insignia were enjoyed by the Zamorin, a Nayar by caste, and by the Kolātīri Rājā. Evidently, the king of Cochin, threatened constantly by the Zamorin's rising power and influence, was on the look-out for an ally who could curb the might of his enemy. Vasco da Gama's landing on the Indian soil in May, 1498 raised hope of translating his dream into reality.

Vasco da Gama failed to get a foothold on the Zamorin's kingdom. But the Rājā of Kolātīri, another arch-enemy of the Zamorin, gave him trading facilities. Pedro Alvarez Gabral, the commander of the next Portuguese expedition, was invited to Cochin and granted permission to trade in 1499. The Portuguese intention was to overthrow the Arabs to establish their

monopoly over the spice-trade of Malabar. But the inept handling of the situation, at the beginning, by the Portuguese threw the Zamorin on the open arms of the Arabs who had their own vested interests. Soon there ensued a relentless struggle between the Portuguese and the Zamorin. This lasted for a century or so. Albuquerque, the greatest of the Portuguese Governors in India, tried to reverse this policy of antagonism but ultimately it failed to produce the desired result. Further, any cessation of hostilities between the Zamorin and the Portuguese was against the interest of the Cochin rulers who wanted both the political powers to remain locked in perpetual war.

The Zamorin's navy led by the brave Kunjali Marakars, the hereditary Admirals of the Calicut power, proved well-nigh a match to the Portuguese strength on water. Many a naval war was fought, and the Kunjalis kept the Portuguese fleet under constant harassment. Their saga of heroism constitutes a golden chapter in India's maritime history. It is an irony of fate that the power of the same Kunjalis, which had by then overgrown, had to be crushed by the Zamorin in 1600 with the help of their arch-enemy, the Portuguese.

The Kunjalis vanished from the scene but a new menace to Portugal's supremacy over the sea appeared. On November 11, 1604 the Dutch concluded a treaty with the Zamorin who promised to offer them all trading facilities. The British ships also touched the Malabar coast in 1615 and the Zamorin granted them freedom of trade in his territory. But it was the Dutch who by 1663 captured all the Portuguese forts of Quilon,

Cranganur, Purakkad, Cochin and Cannanore. The Portuguese had no effective political control over Kerala except within these forts; of course, Quilon and Cochin rulers were virtually their dependencies.

It did not take time for the Cochin ruler to make the Dutch his ally, and soon the Zamorin was drawn into an open conflict with them. But a new star had appeared on the firmament of Kerala's history. It was the Travancore King Mārtāṇḍa Varma, who in the battle of Kolachel, in 1741, had inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Dutch. It was he who introduced the idea of annexation in the Kerala polity and also reduced the power of the Nayar aristocracy to ignoble existence. Even the Zamorin had to sue peace with the Travancore ruler Rāma Varma, who succeeded Mārtāṇḍa Varma, in 1758. As a result, the Zamorin finally withdrew from Cochin.

Both the leading rulers of Kerala had sensed a greater danger, and this time it was an inland power, having a trained army, including cavalry, led by the redoubtable Ḥaidar. Within four months, in 1766, he overran the entire country up to the borders of Cochin. Internecine struggles among petty chieftains and kings had already reduced the political scene of Malabar into shambles; and the successive invasions of Ḥaidar Alī, and lastly by Ṭīpū, brought the economic ruin of the country, adversely affecting both agriculture and trade. Meanwhile, the power of the Nayar aristocracy in the north and central Malabar was crushed completely with a view to establishing a centralized authority and modern revenue system.

Ṭīpū's last invasion, aimed towards Travancore, took place in 1789 but with the outbreak of the monsoon he had to suspend the operation. By that time Cornwallis (1786-93) declared war on Mysore, and Ṭīpū had to withdraw his forces from Kerala to meet the British army. Travancore was thus saved from conquest. The Zamorin and the other rulers of Kerala had already sought the British help to break the shackles of Ṭīpū's domination. Without offering any effective resistance, Ṭīpū's local commanders in Malabar surrendered one after the other to the British (below, pp. 57-59). Ṭīpū Sulṭān, whose name is still remembered in Kerala with horror, was attacked from all the sides. By the treaties of Srirangapatnam (1792) he had to surrender the entire Malabar to the British who brought the area under their direct rule in 1800 making Travancore and Cochin as their vassals. But the real unification of the Malayalam country took place only on the formation of the Kerala state on November 1, 1956 with the merger of Travancore, excluding some parts of Kanyakumari (also spelt Kanniyakumari) District, Cochin, British Malabar and a part of the District of South Kanara, Karnataka.

2. THE MONUMENTS

A. STONE AGE VESTIGES

THE DISCOVERY OF STONE AGE TOOLS FROM DISTRICT Palghat, has now placed Kerala on the prehistoric map of India. An industry belonging to the Late Acheulian to Lower Middle Palaeolithic stage (*circa* 50,000 B.C.) was located here in the river valleys of the Malampurzha and Kanhirapuzha, both being the tributories of the Bharathapuzha, the longest river of Kerala.

Small stone tools or microliths were reported several decades back from Chevayur, near Kozhikode, and comparable to this industry is the one recently discovered near the Malampuzha Dam. Made on quartz or rock-crystal this industry may be dated to about 4000 B.C. because of its similarity with the industries of Teri ('fossilized sand-dunes') in District Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. An industry on chalcedony or chert is reported from the vicinity of the rock-shelter at Maraiyur, District Idikki, associated with early rock paintings. The exploration in the Ponnani valley between Palghat and Shornur also yielded a microlithic industry on quartz, rock-crystal and chert.

The people who used these stone implements were food-gatherers moving from one place to another in search of food. Significantly, Kerala is still the home of a few food-gathering tribes like the Kadars, Uralis, Malapandarams and so on.

The discovery of polished neolithic stone-axes is also reported from different parts of Kerala. The Wayanad area, being geographically nearer to the Karnataka plateau, has a greater potentiality of yielding both microlithic and neolithic sites. Quartz flakes, microliths and a polished stone-axe were picked up several decades back from the Wayanad area. Incidentally, the Edakal cave, in the vicinity, has on its walls some rock-carvings, presumably of late date.

A word may be said here about the Paraśurāma legend which ascribes the creation of the land of Kerala to this sage, who is considered as one of the *avatāras* of Vishṇu. Perhaps the Paraśurāma legend, confined to the west coast, preserves a distant memory of the reclamation of land from the sea but date of this event is hard to compute in the present state of historical research, since oscillation of sea-level was a phenomenon which took place even in historical times.

B. Megalithic monuments

The megalithic remains constitute Kerala's earliest vestiges of standing monuments, mostly of lateritic stones. These are funerary monuments locally known as *Pandoo coolies* ('pit of the Pāṇḍavas'), often associated with human skeletal remains and burial-furniture. These monuments, conforming clearly to six main types, have a wide distribution falling within the time-brackets of two or three centuries before and one century after Christ; some of the monuments may be still later. Besides yielding characteristic Black-and-red Ware of

megalithic association some of the megaliths brought to light Russet-coated Painted Ware occurring in many historical sites in south India.

Kerala had the unique distinction of evolving a few types of its own: rock-cut tombs generally sunk in laterite bed-rocks, *kuḍaikal* or hood-stones and *ṭopikal* or hat-stone are without any analogues in the rest of India. All the three types simulate an umbrella, the emblem of authority and power. The other three types like dolmenoid cists, urn-burials and menhirs have their counterparts in different areas of the south. The following are the brief descriptions of the six main types of the megalithic monuments of Kerala.

(i) ROCK-CUT TOMBS.—Generally concentrated in the laterite zone of the Districts Trichur, Malappuram, Kozhikode and Cannanore, these are roughly oblong or circular on plan with single or multiple chambers. Provided with narrow rectangular entrance, some of the caves have single or double benches, besides having an open court. Most of the caves face east though the north-facing caves are also not wanting. In many instances, the main cave has a central shaft, vaguely recalling similar arrangement in the shaft-graves of the Mediterranean islands and the Middle East. Grave-goods inside the cave comprise burial urns in red ware, pottery belonging largely to the Black-and-red Ware class, footed jars, sarcophagus, iron objects like blades, hatchets, swords, billhooks, tripod, stone-beads, and sometimes even bronze bowl. There are instances of the presence of the Russet-coated Painted Ware in some caves.

(ii) Kuḍaikals or hood-stones.—Made of dressed granite, the *kuḍaikal* resembles handleless umbrellas of palm leaf used by the local people. It is in the form of a dome covering generally a burial-pit enclosing an urn. One such jar in the *kuḍaikal* yielded two painted cups containing bone-fragments.

(iii) Ṭopikals or hat-stones.—The *ṭopikal*, also made of dressed laterite, consists of a circular stone with a domical profile resting on a shaft. The shaft itself is made of four pieces of stone, arranged more or less in a curvilinear form. It is found to have no burial appendage.

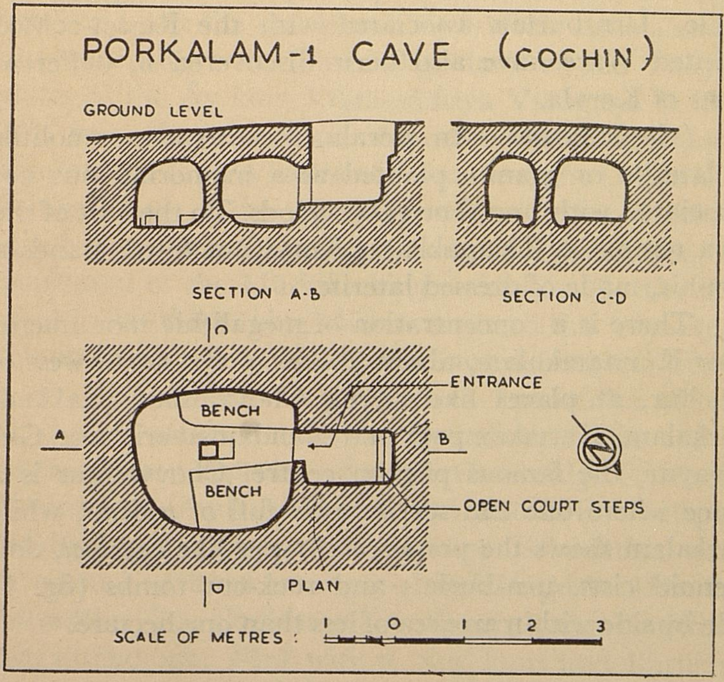


Fig. 1

(iv) Dolmenoid-cists.—These are burial-chambers, made of four slabs placed on edges, the fifth one covering the cist as a capstone. The entire structure is enclosed on the surface by a stone-circle; sometimes one such circle bounds a number of dolmens. In this type of megalith, a quadrangle is scooped out in laterite and its sides are lined with granite slabs with a capstone placed on top.

(v) Burial-urns.—These have a wide distribution along the coasts of peninsular India. First a pit is sunk to lodge the urn containing bones and burial furnishings. It is then sealed with a capstone, enclosed by a stone-circle. Urn-burials associated with the Russet-coated Painted Ware have also been discovered in defferent parts of Kerala.

(vi) Menhirs.—In Kerala, menhirs are monoliths of laterite or granite planted as a memorial, but not associated with burial or grave-goods. To the east of the Śiva temple at Tirunakkara, Kottayam town, stands a menhir, made of dressed laterite.

There is a concentration of megalithic monuments near Kunnamkulam, about 24 km to the north-west of Trichur, at places like Eyyal, Chovvannur, Kakkad, Porkalam, Kattakampala and Kandamssheri, near Guruvayur, the famous pilgrim centre. Chovvannur is a place where one can see an area full of *ṭopikals*, while Porkalam shows the presence of types like *kuḍaikal*, dolmenoid cists, urn-burials and rock-cut tombs (fig. 1) side by side within an area of less than one hectare.

C. Buddhist and Jaina vestiges

Kerala has no extant Buddhist monastery but images of Buddha ascribable from the seventh to the ninth centuries have come to light from places like Karumadi, Mavelikara, Bharanikavu and Pallikkal in the Districts of Alleppey and Quilon in south Kerala. What is significant is the discovery of an image of Buddha at Marudurkulangara, near Trivandrum, bearing the stamp of the Anuradhapuram tradition from Sri Lanka; the image has been dated stylistically to the seventh or eighth century.

Of the Buddhist monasteries in Kerala, the most renowned was the one known as Śrīmūlavāsam, identified generally with Tirumūlapādam of the Paliyam plates of the Āy king Vikramāditya Varaguṇa (*c.* 885-925) recording the grant of land to the Bhaṭṭāraka of Tirumūlapādam. A *vihāra* of the same name (Mūlavāsa) is mentioned in the *Mūshika-vaṁśa*, a Sanskrit epic of about the eleventh century, composed by Atula, the court-poet of the Mūshika king Śrīkaṇṭha. By the time of the Mūshika king Vikramarāma the monastery was about to be engulfed by the encroaching sea (above, p. 6). The image of Bodhisattva Lokanātha of this monastery attained renown throughout India and its representation is preserved in the Cambridge University Manuscript (Add. 1643) dated to A.D. 1015. It depicts the figure of a four-armed standing Lokanātha, white in colour, with the inscription *Dakshiṇapatha Mūlavāsa-Lokanātha*. The Bodhisattva is shown accompanied by two attendants: Tārā with a blue lotus and Bhṛukuṭi, with a lotus and a water-pot.

The Jaina monuments, mostly ascribable to the period from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, are available over different parts of Kerala. The most impressive one amongst the rock-shelters is on the Tiruchchāraṇattumalai, near Chitral, District Kanyakumari. On the side of the natural cavern, formed by an overhanging rock, are sculptured a number of *tīrthaṅkara* figures, apart from some inscribed votive images carved by visitors hailing from distant places. Of these reliefs, the most important are Pārśvanātha, Mahāvīra, Padmāvatī and Ambikā, the last with her lion mount. An important inscription here is the one belonging to the Āy king Vikramāditya Varaguṇa (*c.* 880-925), and it records the gift of some golden ornaments to the Bhaṭariyār of the Tiruchchāraṇattumalai. After the mid-thirteenth century it was converted into a Bhagavatī shrine.

There is a Jaina rock-shelter also at Kallil, near Perumpavur, District Ernakulam, which was later transformed into a Bhagavatī shrine. On the façade of this rock-shelter is carved an unfinished seated image of Mahāvīra, represented also on the back wall of the cavern.

Of the structural temples, the ruined site of Sakkiyar Bhagavatī shrine at Godapuram, near Alattur, District Palghat, deserves special mention, as it is associated with two Jina figures, Mahāvīra and Pārśvanātha, now in the Trichur Museum, and an inscription of the tenth century. At present, the site is represented by a few buried structures and some scattered architectural pieces. Palghat proper has also a Jaina temple dedicated to the eighth *tīrthaṅkara* Chandraprabha but its date cannot

be ascertained in view of the thorough renovation that it had undergone in recent times. In front of the present temple stands the basement of an earlier shrine. A headless Jina figure, of the ninth/tenth century, seated in the *vajra-paryaṅka* pose, was recovered from the site. Sultan's Battery, also known as Gaṇapati-vaṭṭam, has the ruins of a Jaina Basti, which may be dated to the fourteenth century. It is an example of a cloistered temple built entirely of granite.

D. Brahmanical temples: rock-cut

It is evident from the foregoing that the megalithic builders of Kerala made extensive use of laterite, though the working on granite was not unknown to them. In the period of rock-architecture, granite was the only medium for excavating a number of cave-temples. Yet the granite tradition appears to be an intrusive element in Kerala that drifted from the Tamil country; this tradition was responsible for all her surviving monuments of fine workmanship and enduring beauty.

These cut-in caves have two zones of concentration (fig. 2): the southern group located in the ancient Āy territory, while the northern group falls in the Chera country. But the geographical location in the respective territories has no bearing on the authorship of the caves, for so far there is no evidence that may justify any attempt at attributing these caves to the Cheras or the Āy rulers.

The southern group consists of caves located variously at Vilinjam, the capital of the later Āys, and

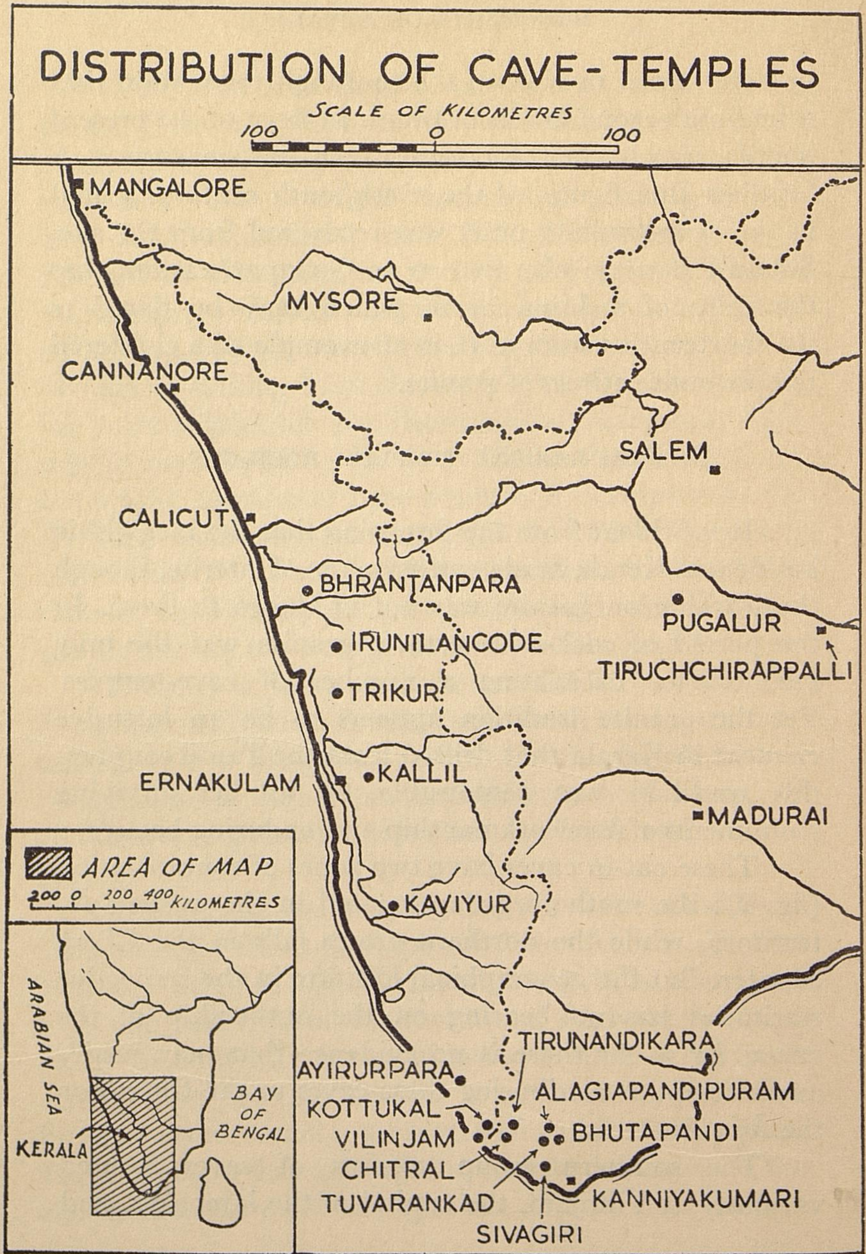

DISTRIBUTION OF CAVE-TEMPLES
SCALE OF KILOMETRES
100
0
100
MANGALORE
MYSORE
CANNANORE
SALEM
CALICUT
BHRANTANPARA
PUGALUR
IRUNILANCODE
TIRUCHCHIRAPPALLI
TRIKUR
ERNAKULAM
KALLIL
MADURAI
AREA OF MAP
200 0 200 400 KILOMETRES
KAVIYUR
ARABIAN SEA
BAY OF BENGAL
KERALA
TIRUNANDIKARA
AYIRURPARA
ALAGIAPANDIPURAM
KOTTUKAL
BHUTAPANDI
VILINJAM
CHITRAL
TUVARANKAD
KANNIYAKUMARI
SIVAGIRI

FIG. 2

Ayirurpara, in District Trivandrum; Kottukal, in District Quilon; and Kaviyur, in District Alleppey. Some caves, now falling within the District Kanyakumari, like the ones at Tirunandikara, Bhutapandi, Tuvarankad, Sivagiri and Alagiapandipuram may be included in the southern group.

Of the rock-cut caves, the one at Kaviyur, dedicated to Śiva, is the best and is a well-finished example, in Kerala, which is associated with beautiful reliefs bearing imprints of a mature plastic tradition. The cave comprises a shrine with a *liṅga*, an *ardha-maṇḍapa* and a pillared façade, all arranged axially facing the west. Walls of the spacious *ardha-maṇḍapa* contain reliefs of the donor or chieftain, a bearded *ṛishi*, a seated four-armed Gaṇeśa, apart from the *dvārapālas*. Amongst the bas-reliefs, the standing figure of the chieftain or donor (pl. I) is very conspicuous. It serves as an indubitable link between the Pāṇḍya and the southern group of Kerala because almost similar portraiture having an identical head-dress occurs in the Tirumayam and Virasikhamani caves in the heart of the Tamil country. Further, the *dvārapāla* figure at Kaviyur resembles closely the ones noticed at Sevalpatti and Tirumalapuram in the Districts of Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli respectively. Like the cave-temple at Kaviyur, the one at Ayirurpara, excavated at the mid-height of the hill, facing the south-west, has an oblong shrine, with a rock-cut *liṅga*, an *ardha-maṇḍapa*, and a pillared façade.

Another important excavation is the cave-temple at Tirunandikara with a layout comparable to that

of Umaiyandan cave at Tirupparankunram and the Satyavāgīśvara temple at Tirumayam. The oblong shrine, having a flight of steps, faces east but occupies the western end of the excavation which faces south. It has an *ardha-maṇḍapa*, with a pillared façade and a rudimentary *mahā-maṇḍapa*. One of the pillars here contains an inscription of the latter half of the eighth century. Originally, there were paintings inside (below, p. 67), and this practice was followed quite often in the decoration of the Pāṇḍya caves.

Two rock-cut caves, both facing east, at Kottukal, belong also to the Śaiva faith. Excavated in a very low outcrop, the smaller one, consisting of a shrine-cell and a porch, has in one of its niches a standing figure of Hanumān; it recalls a similar figure in one of the caves at Kunnattur, District Madurai. The bigger cave adjacent to it is an impressive excavation, with a four-sided *garbha-gṛiha*, an *ardha-maṇḍapa*, and a pillared façade. Each of the caves is associated with a monolithic *nandi* or bull, the vehicle (*vāhana*) of Śiva.

All other caves in the southern group are examples of one-celled shrine, mostly enshrining a *liṅga*. Among them, the most important is the excavation in a granite outcrop at Kottukal, popularly known as Vilinjam, with its unfinished reliefs of Śiva as Kirātamūrti (pl. II A) and dancing Śiva with Pārvatī. At present, the cave, facing east, enshrines a loose sculpture of Vīṇādhara-Dakshiṇāmūrti. Some scholars hold the view that the bas-reliefs of Vilinjam, with their slender forms and rhythmic lines, show Pallava affinity. But the Śiva figures of Vilinjam compare well in stance and graceful

flexion with the dancing Śiva of the Tirumalapuram cave which is definitely of Pāṇḍya origin.

It is evident from the above that the cave-temples in southern Kerala, like those of the Pāṇḍya country, were inspired mostly by a Śaiva movement. But there is at least one cave dedicated to Vishṇu: it is from Alagiapandipuram in the Tovala Taluk of District Kanyakumari. On the backwall of the cell is carved an incomplete figure of four-armed Vishṇu.

Śaivism dominated the rock-architecture of the northern group as well. At Trikkur, in District Trichur, the *garbha-gṛiha* and the two-armed *dvārapālas* face northward, whereas the *liṅga-pīṭha* has been cut facing the east. The pillared frontage is absent at Irunilancode, District Trichur, but it contains reliefs of Dakshiṇāmūrti (pl. II B), Vishṇu and Śiva on the shrine-walls. These reliefs bear influence of the Atiya or the Pallava plastic art. There is another indication of the infiltration of the Pallava tradition and technique into the Chera country, the evidence of which is supplied by the unfinished example at Bhrantanpara, District Palghat. Here the Pallava method of blocking out the face of the vertical scarp into series of squares, bounded by deep grooves, was adopted.

The technique of rock-architecture might have spread to Kerala some time in the eighth century. Politically, the eighth century appears to be a propitious time so far as south Kerala is concerned when at least two Pāṇḍya rulers—Kochchaḍaiyaṉ or Raṇadhīra (A.D. 700-30) and Rājasiṁha I (730-65) kept the Āy chieftains under the firm grip, thus paving the way for close

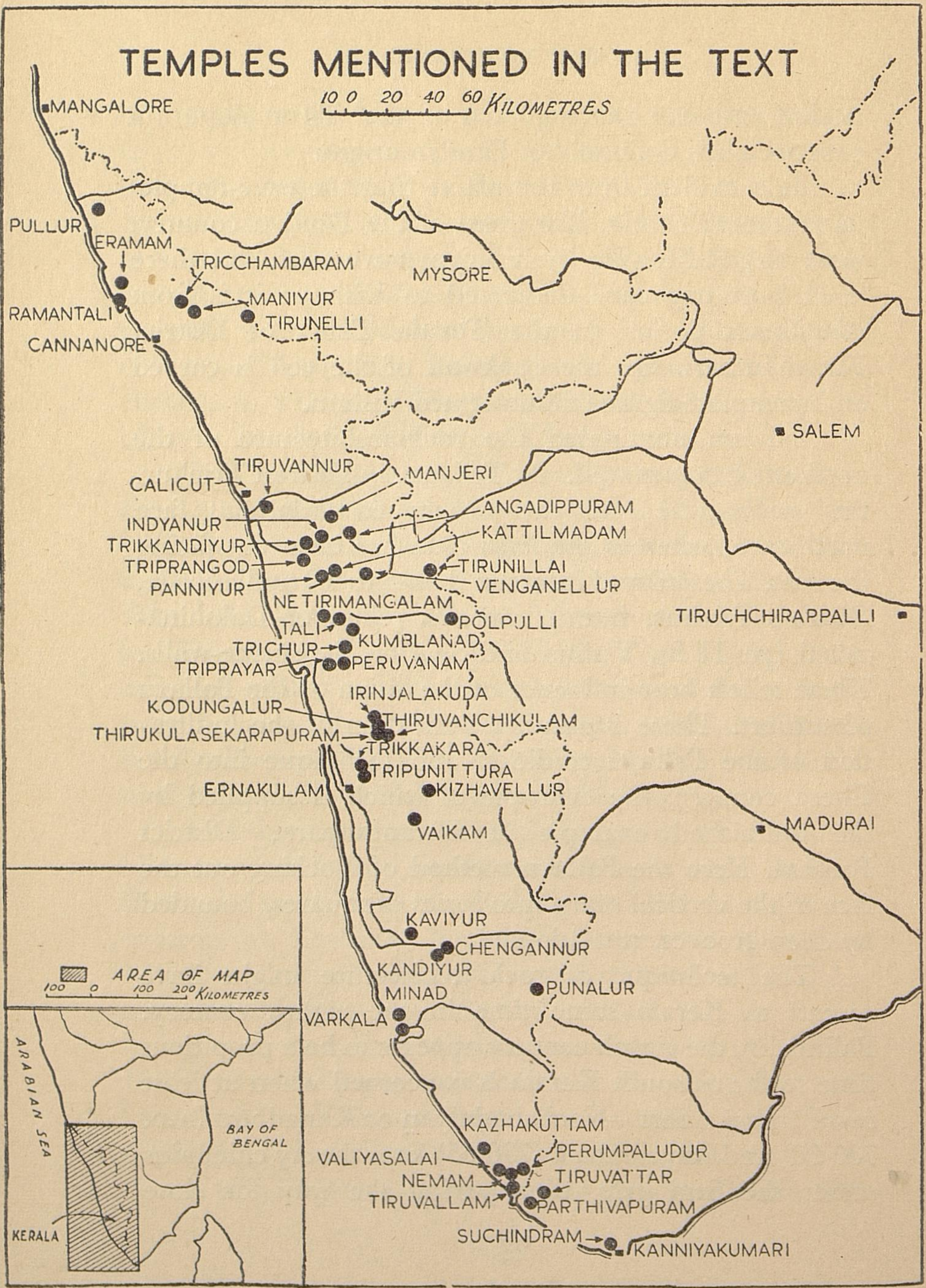

TEMPLES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT
10 0 20 40 60 KILOMETRES
MANGALORE
PULLUR
ERAMAM
TRICCHAMBARAM
MYSORE
MANIYUR
RAMANTALI
TIRUNELLI
CANNANORE
SALEM
TIRUVANNUR
CALICUT
MANJERI
ANGADIPPURAM
INDYANUR
KATTILMADAM
TRIKKANDIYUR
TRIPRANGOD
TIRUNILLAI
PANNIYUR
VENGANELLUR
NETIRIMANGALAM
TIRUCHCHIRAPPALLI
POLPULLI
TALI
KUMBLANAD
TRICHUR
TRIPRAYAR
PERUVANAM
IRINJALAKUDA
KODUNGALUR
THIRUVANCHIKULAM
THIRUKULASEKARAPURAM
TRIKKAKARA
TRIPUNITTURA
ERNAKULAM
KIZHAVELLUR
VAIKAM
MADURAI
KAVIYUR
CHENGANNUR
KANDIYUR
PUNALUR
MINAD
VARKALA
AREA OF MAP
100 0 100 200 KILOMETRES
ARABIAN SEA
BAY OF BENGAL
KERALA
KAZHAKUTTAM
PERUMPALUDUR
VALIYASALAI
NEMAM
TIRUVATTAR
TIRUVALLAM
PARTHIVAPURAM
SUCHINDRAM
KANNIYAKUMARI

FIG. 3

cultural contacts. The very fact that some of the caves remained incomplete in the Chera country precluded the possibility of their being Chera enterprises as the Kulaśekharas ruled for three hundred years, and had, therefore, had enough time for some king or the other to complete a project started by one of his predecessors. In the circumstances, the caves in the northern group also may be dated prior to the rise of the Kulaśekharas.

E. Brahmanical temples: structural

(i) *Beginnings*

The Brahmanical temples (fig. 3) constitute the majority of monuments in Kerala but the history of their beginning is still shrouded in obscurity. During the time of the early Cheras, as references in the Śaṅgam literature show, Vedic practices of sacrifice held an exalted position, for many Chera rulers participated in such activities. At the same time, some of them extended their patronage to the worship of Vishṇu, Skanda or Subrahmaṇya and Koṟṟavai, the south Indian counterpart of Durgā or Bhagavatī. All these may show that there were shrines in the Chera country although it is difficult to visualize their structural forms. Yet the existence of open-air shrines for Koṟṟavai, the Goddess of Victory, may be assumed from some of the descriptions in the Śaṅgam literature. Even today there are numerous Bhagavatī shrines in Kerala in the form of roofless temples; for example, the Bhagavatī shrine

in the famous Kṛishṇa temple at Guruvayur, District Trichur, is still open to the sky or hypaethral in type.

The *bhakti* movement led by stalwarts like Kāraikkāl Ammai, Appar, Sambandar, Sundarar, Pūdam, Poygai, Pey, Āṇḍāl, and others created a stir in the south from the sixth to the ninth centuries, and truly speaking, it was this movement which provided the real impetus to temple-architecture. In the eighth century several cave-temples came into existence in Kerala, and these are the outcome of the same religious ferment. Quite likely, some structural temples—and the Buddhists must have built a few of them earlier for enshrining the image of Buddha or Bodhisattva—were also raised. Unfortunately, there is no archaeological evidence regarding the construction of temples that may be dated prior to the ninth century, and even then, the evidence is nothing more than circumstantial.

Tradition associates Kulaśekhara Āḻvār with the construction of the Kṛishṇa temple at Thirukulaśekarapuram, near Thiruvanchikulam. Whatever may be the fact, an inscription found at the entrance into the courtyard of the present temple there, ascribable to the eleventh century, records some gifts offered in the 195th year of the construction of the shrine. This gives roughly ninth century as the date of first construction of the temple. The nearby Kīḻataḷi Śiva temple can claim an equally old date, for the images of the *Saptamātṛikās* from the temple, now in the Trichur Museum, may be dated stylistically to the ninth century (below, p. 30). A still clearer evidence comes from the Śiva temple at Kandiyur, District Alleppey: an inscription

from this temple is stated to have been dated in the 123rd year of the god at Kandiyur which is equivalent to A.D. 823. This particular inscription does not furnish any corresponding date in the Kollam era, but another inscription engraved on the *adhishṭhāna* gives the Kollam years 392 and 393 (A.D. 1217 and 1218) as corresponding to the 394th and 396th years of the god of Kandiyur respectively. Thus the inscriptional evidence suggests that the temple-architecture must have had its beginning at least by the early part of the ninth century. Perhaps the political revival of the Cheras was accompanied by a religious upheaval giving rise to temples built in some permanent material.

(ii) *Distribution*

The distribution of various types of temples in the west coast presents an interesting picture. There are not only square or rectangular but also circular, apsidal and rarely even elliptical temples here. Nowhere in India do the circular shrines constitute such a dominant type as in Kerala. Moreover, this type of ground-plan shows a greater preponderance in the southern half of the state and it becomes rarer as one proceeds further to the north. It may not be a mere coincidence that circular temples show greater incidence in the region once under the influence of Buddhism, as most of the known Buddhist sites in Kerala are located in the Alleppey and Quilon regions. On the contrary, the apsidal ground-plan occurs sporadically all along the west coast right up to Trivandrum, with some concentration in central Kerala and South Kanara District

of Karnataka. Most of these temples have comparatively a longer width, thereby assuming almost a semi-circular plan similar to the famous Paraśurāmeśvara temple at Gudimallam, District Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh. There are a few temples in Kerala showing rectangular and elliptical ground-plans as well. Thus the famous Śiva temple at Vaikam, District Kottayam, is built on an elliptical plan rather than on circular. Again, the granite basement of an older shrine, now used as *kūttambalam*, in the Mahādeva temple at Chengannur, District Alleppey, has clearly an elliptical outline. For enshrining the Anantaśāyī Vishṇu and also *Sapta-mātṛikās*, a rectangular plan is generally favoured. For example, the Bhagavatī temple at Angadippuram, meant for enshrining the *Sapta-mātṛikās*, is rectangular on plan; likewise, the Tiruvattar temple, District Kanyakumari, and the Padmanābhasvāmī temple at Trivandrum are also rectangular on plan as they house the Anantaśāyī form of Vishṇu.

Most of the temples of Kerala have walls made of laterite blocks. But temples made entirely of granite save, of course, their superstructures, are common in the Districts of Quilon and Trivandrum. In the Districts of Kottayam and Alleppey, however, walls are entirely made of wood, and are carved beautifully with various legends and *purāṇic* episodes (below, p. 65).

(iii) *Architectural phases*

Kerala is a land of temples. Yet unlike the history of the Chālukyan or the Pallava traditions, the early

temples here are not represented by intact monuments. Indeed many of the standing temples here must have had an early beginning but periodical renovations, specially of the wooden superstructure, had removed practically all traces of their earlier forms. It is the sloping roofs, sometimes reduplicated, and the profuse use of wood in superstructures that have lent a distinctive individuality to the temples of Kerala. This type is common throughout the west coast, yet it is just a local adaptation of the south Indian architectural tradition. Divergences in the structural form that one notices here were introduced primarily to counteract the phenomenon of heavy rainfall. Some superficial similarity with the architectural traditions of the Himalayan region, China and far eastern countries is due mainly to the use of sloping roofs on wooden frames, which contributes certain uniform characters despite variable geographical situations. Nevertheless, the temple-architecture of Kerala passed through at least three major stages of development, which may be summarized as follows.

Early phase.—The temple-architecture during the Early phase (*c.* A.D. 800-1000) was patronized not only by the Cheras of Mahodayapuram but also by the Āys of south Kerala and the Mūshikas of north Malabar. Temples during the period were built variously on square, circular and apsidal plans; because of the discovery of *Sapta-mātṛikā* images from various places the prevalance of rectangular shrines may also be postulated. Generally, the main temple or *śrī-kovil* has a detached *namaskāra-maṇḍapa*, built on a square plan

with a pyramidal roof. It is well-known that originally the Kailāsanātha temple, of eighth century, at Kāñchīpuram, Tamil Nadu, had its *maṇḍapa* detached from the shrine proper. The architectural layout that the temples in Kerala followed or still follow, appears, therefore, to be of a very old tradition. Temples without any *namaskāra maṇḍapa* are also to be seen. None the less the temples here are invariably cloistered because of the quadrangular *nālambalam* which encloses the *śrī-kovil* and the *namaskāra-maṇḍapa*. The entrance to the *nālambalam* is graced by a small stone structure known as *balipīṭha*, an invariable feature of the temples in the Tamil country and Kerala. In subsequent times, however, the layout of the Kerala temples assumed more elaboration specially in their arrangement.

Of the three types of available ground-plans, the temples built on a square plan show an even distribution throughout Kerala. Theoretically speaking, square *vimāna*, antedates the other ones, because all the cave-temples, definitely of an earlier tradition, conform to this. Further, the Kṛishṇa temple at Thirukulasekharapuram, the Kīḻataḷi temple at Thiruvanchikulam, the Śiva temple at Tali (fig. 4) near Wadakancherry, all in District Trichur, the Śiva temple in the Gaṇapati-kshetram at Indyanur, District Malappuram, the Mahādeva temple at Kazhakuttam (pl. IV), District Trivandrum, are examples of two-storeyed *vimāna*, each consisting of a square *garbha-gṛiha*, with a circumambulatory passage all round, an *ardha-maṇḍapa*, and a narrower *mahā-maṇḍapa*. All these temples are associated with inscriptions or sculptures ascribable to the ninth or

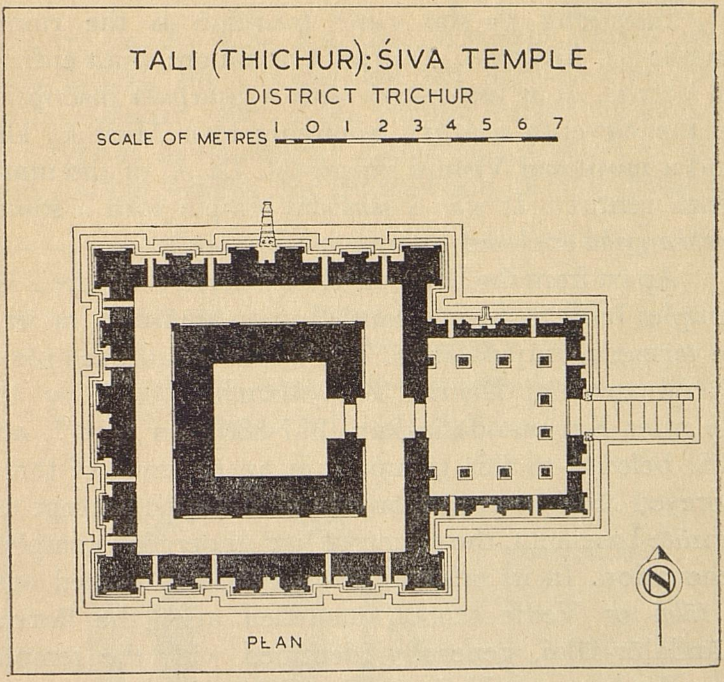


FIG. 4

tenth century. Although devoid of any datable antiquities, the ruined Lakshmīnārāyaṇa shrine in the Ayyappaṉ temple-complex at Panniyur, District Palghat, and the deserted shrine, now used as stores, in the famous Bhagavatī temple at Kodungallur, District Trichur, are very similar in style, to the Kīḻtaḷi Śiva temple mentioned above. Such temples are known as *sāndhāra vimāna*, the antiquity of which dates back to the Gupta phase of the temple-architecture of India. Kerala derived this feature either through the Chālukyan or the Pallava traditions.

Belonging to the same tradition is the ruined temple at Eramam, District Cannanore, built entirely of laterite. It is associated with a *vaṭṭeḻuttu* inscription of the eleventh century belonging to a Mūshika king and a mutilated Vishṇu image (pl. IX A) of the ninth-tenth century. It was a *sāndhāra* temple with a square *garbha-gṛiha* enclosed by square outer walls.

Apart from the Drāviḍa-Kerala style, there are a few temples built in typical south Indian tradition, or let it be termed, Drāviḍa style. The Pārthasārathi temple at Parthivapuram, District Kanyakumari, built by the Āy ruler Karunandaḍakkaṉ (857-880), on July 7, A.D. 866, belongs to this group. It is an example of three-storeyed *sāndhāra vimāna* on square plan, but except the granite basement, the structure had undergone complete renovation. In its original set-up, it was attached with a *śālai* or Vedic school, modelled after the famous Kāndaḷūr-śālai, generally identified with the temple-complex known as Valiyasalai at Trivandrum.

The circular temples, rare in other parts of south India, and also unknown in the civil and the tribal architecture of Kerala, constitute here an important group, almost contemporaneous with the four-sided temples. The Śiva temple at Polpulli, District Palghat, survived only by its granite basement, appears to be a *nirandhāra* temple associated with a Sanskrit inscription of the middle of the ninth century. At Perumpaludur, District Trivandrum, the excavated temple-site yielded the circular outer wall surrounding a square *garbha-gṛiha* and a mutilated image of Vishṇu. According to the inscription on the *balipīṭha* this Vishṇu temple was

built by the Āy king Karunandadakkan in A.D. 867. Even though the circular temples are uncommon in north Malabar, one of the earliest extant remains of such type is to be seen at Ramantali, District Cannanore, falling within the jurisdiction of the Mūshika

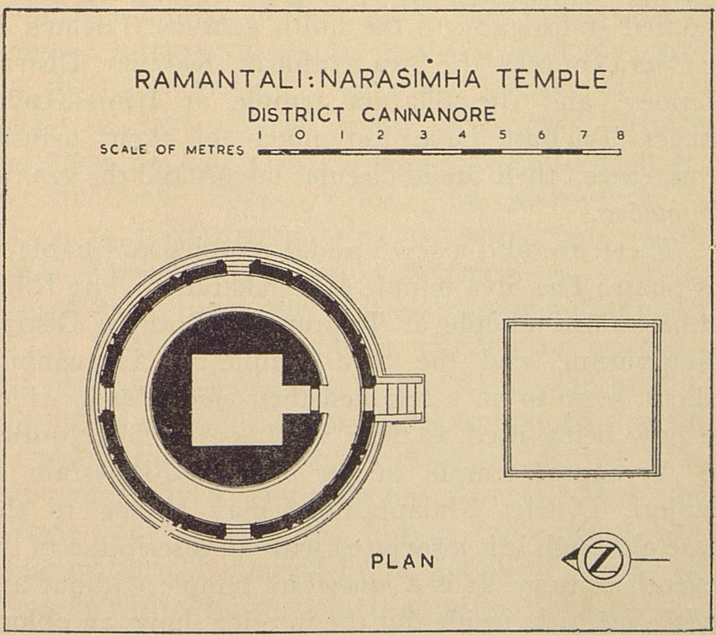


Fig. 5

territory. Like the one at Perumpaludur, it is a *sāndhāra* temple. Its outer circular wall, enclosing the circular *garbha-griha*, has been transformed internally into a square (fig. 5). The outer wall is pierced on all the four sides by functional doors, a feature shared by a temple-type known in the ancient *Vāstu-śāstras* as the

sarvatobhadra temple. This type of temple is common in the early and middle phases irrespective of the ground-plan that it follows. Significantly, the temple at Ramantali is associated with two inscriptions one dated to A.D. 928 and the other to A.D. 1132. A stone image of Śāstā (pl. IX B) kept in the vicinity of the temple may be dated stylistically to the ninth century. Located in the Chera country, the Śiva temple at Kaviyur, District Alleppey, and the Bharata temple at Irinjalakuda, District Trichur, have lost much of their pristine forms, except their broad circular layout and the granite *adhishṭhāna*.

There are also a few apsidal temples ascribable to this phase. The Śiva temple at Trikkandiyur, the Kālasaṁhāramūrti temple at Triprangod, both in District Malappuram, and the Śiva temple at Tiruvannur, Calicut, seem to have retained their *adhishṭhānas*, which are now being used as their *upapīṭhas*. Architecturally, the Ayyappaṉ temple in the Karikkad-kshetram at Manjeri, District Malappuram, may belong to this phase although it is associated with an inscription of the eleventh century. It is a *nirandhāra* temple without any *pradakshiṇā-patha* inside but the interior shows an oblong plan, divided into a square *garbha-gṛiha* and a rectangular *mahā-maṇḍapa*. It is thus similar in plan to the Agastyeśvara temple at Chilamakuru, District Cuddapah, Andhra Pradesh, datable to the eighth century.

MIDDLE PHASE.—The middle phase (*c.* A.D. 1001-1300) is characterized by the emergence of a developed type of *sāndhāra vimāna*, unique in the history of south Indian architecture. In the *sāndhāra*

temples of the early phase throughout India, the inner wall touches the ceiling similar to that of the outer wall or *bāhya-bhitti*. Secondly, a functional circumambulatory path runs around the *garbha-gṛiha*. Let it be emphasized here that this *pradakshiṇā-patha* is distinct from the uncovered one provided around the *śrī-kovil*. Yet another distinguishing mark of the middle phase is the existence of double circumambulatory paths around the *garbha-gṛiha*. In many instances, there are columns along the *pradakshiṇā-patha*, known locally as *śuṭṭunāḍi*. Further, one notices the emergence of temples with three or even two functional doors. Lastly, the *garbha-gṛiha* has become completely a separate entity with its own characteristic superstructure and sometimes even exclusive flight of steps. Invariably it is an example of miniature Drāviḍa *vimāna*, either square, circular or apsidal on plan, with an independent *grīvā* and *śikhara*. Occasionally, it has its own *adhishṭhāna* and other components peculiar to a south Indian temple. In other words, the Kerala temple of this phase stands as the synthesis of two styles, Drāviḍa and Kerala: the former represented by its miniature form is housed inside a typical Kerala style of temple with sloping roofs. It appears that the circular temples with a *grabha-gṛiha* surrounded by one or two rows of columns bear some similarity with the circular Buddhist temples of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) known as *vaṭadāge*. There is a strong tradition in Kerala about the migration of Īḻavas from Sri Lanka and this people might have popularized this type of architecture which in the course of time got mingled up with the Brahmanical tradition. Its actual beginning is difficult to

determine but there cannot be any doubt that this trend made a deep impact on the temple-architecture of this and the subsequent phases.

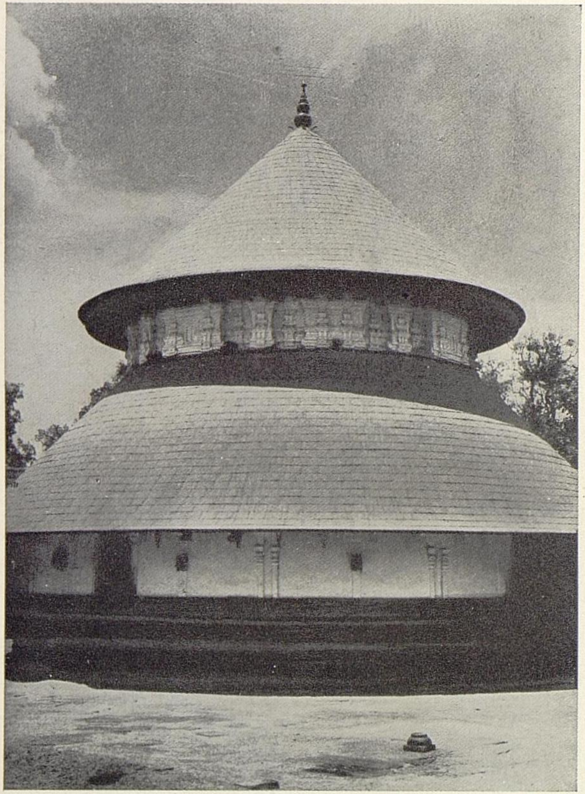
Temples ascribed here to the Middle phase—and many of them may have had an earlier beginning—continued to be built variously on four-sided, circular and apsidal plans. In the Karikkad-kshetram at Manjeri, mentioned earlier (p. 34), is located a circular Subrahmaṇya shrine (pl. III A), with some twelfth-century inscriptions engraved on its *adhishṭhāna*. It is a double-storeyed *vimāna* of the *sarvatobhadra* type having four functional doors. The circumambulatory path around the square *garbha-gṛiha* has a row of twelve columns. In the Śiva temple at Tirunillai (pl. VI A), in the outskirts of Palghat, there is also only one circumambulatory path around the circular inner shrine, built of bricks. Transformed internally into a square, it has an octagonal *grīvā* and *śikhara* constructed on corbelled arch. The small inner shrine serving as the *garbha-gṛiha* was enclosed by an outer circular wall now represented simply by the granite *adhishṭhāna*. Similarly, the Nīramaṅkara temple at Nemam, near Trivandrum, has an inner shrine, made of brick, in the form of a square Drāviḍa *vimāna* enclosed by a circular outer wall. The circumambulatory path around the *garbha-gṛiha* has a row of eight columns aligned in a circle, apart from two more on either side of the inner shrine. This temple is generally dated to the fourteenth century but the Vishṇu image housed in a subsidiary shrine here must be earlier than the fourteenth century, while the image of Brāhmī originally forming part of the *Sapta-mātṛikā* panel has to

Kaviyur, rock-cut cave: bas-relief of chieftain. *See p. 21*

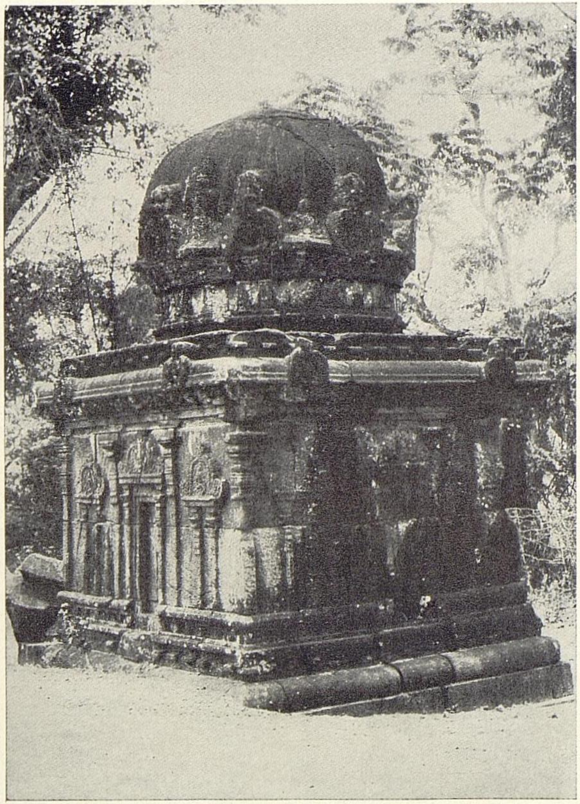
PLATE II

A. *Vilinjam, rock-cut cave: bas-relief of Śiva as Kirātamūrti.* *See p. 22*

B. *Irunilancode, rock-cut cave: bas-relief of Śiva as Dakshiṇāmūrti.* *See p. 23*

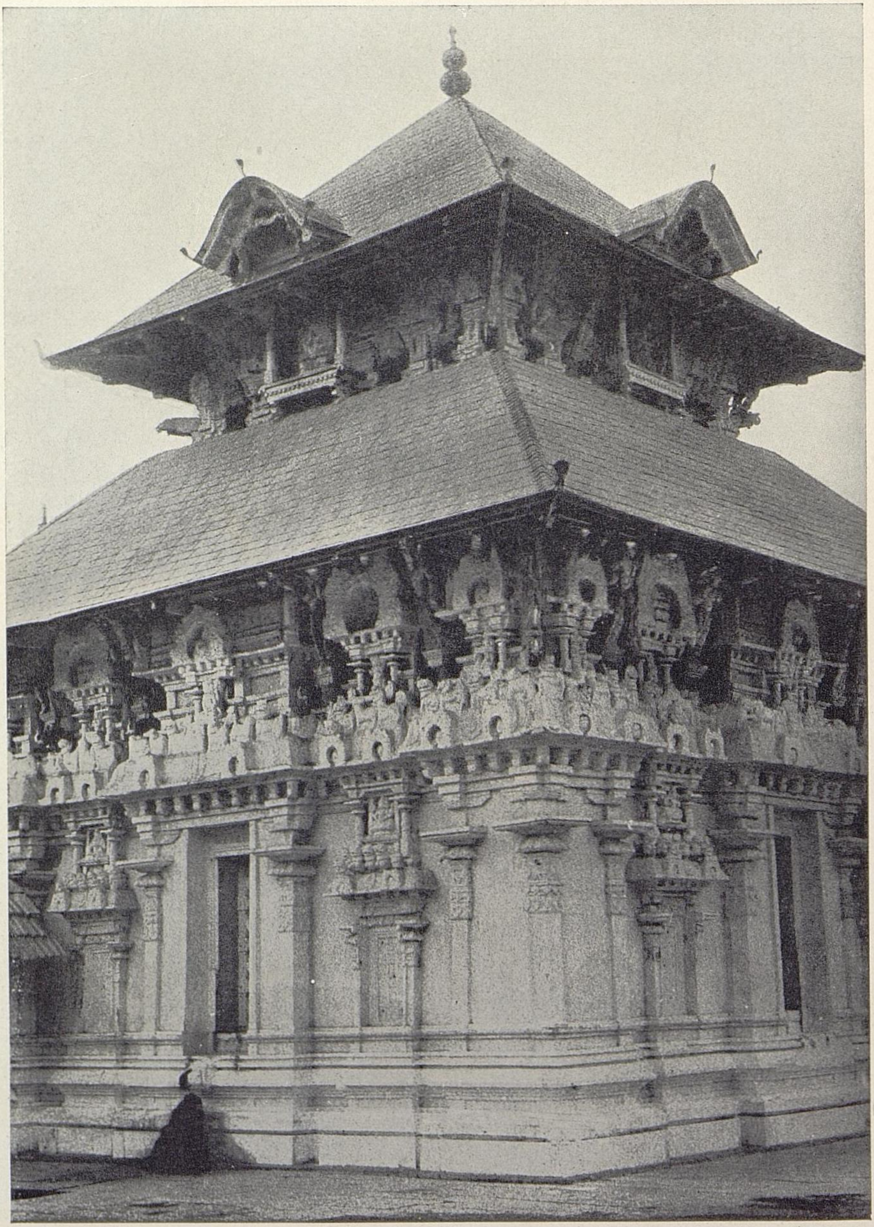


A. *Manjeri, Karikkad-kshetram: circular Subrahmaṇya shrine.* *See p. 36*



B. *Chalapuram, Kaṭṭilmāḍam: all-stone Drāviḍa vimāna.* *See p. 40*

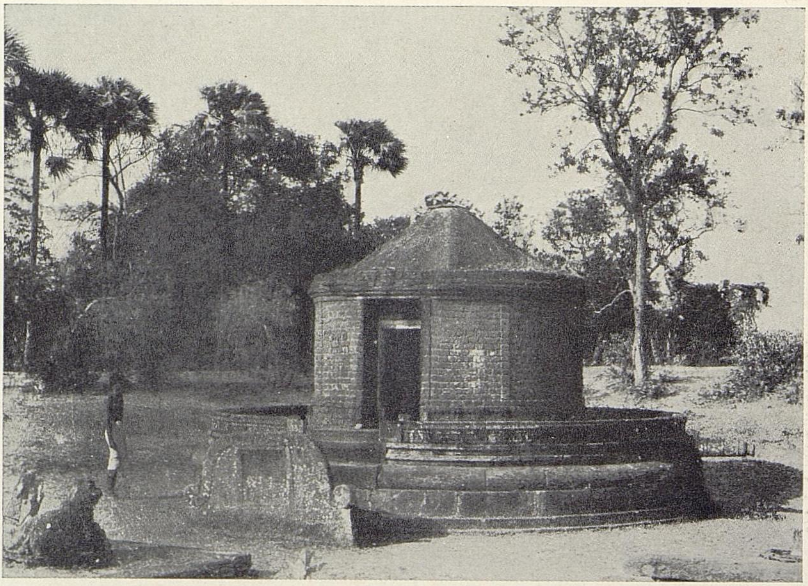
PLATE IV



Kazhakuttam, Mahādeva temple: general view. *See p. 30*

Peruvanam, Śiva temple: general view of Māḍattilappaṉ shrine. *See p. 40*

PLATE VI

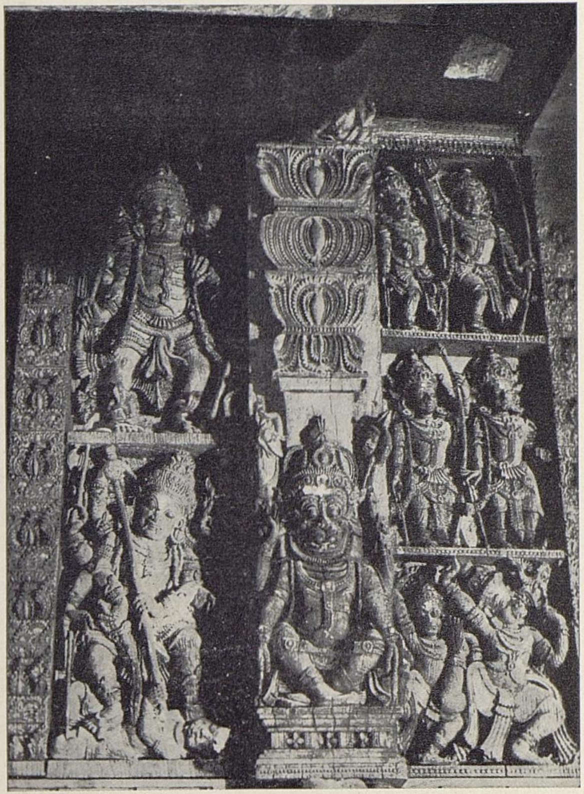


A. *Tirunillai (Palghat), Śiva temple: view of circular garbha-gṛiha.* *See p. 36*

B. *Trichur, Vaḍakkunnātha temple: general view of gopura and apsidal Ayyappaṉ shrine.* *See p. 42*

A. *Kidangur, Subrahmaṇya temple: dance-scene on banister. See pp. 43 and 62*

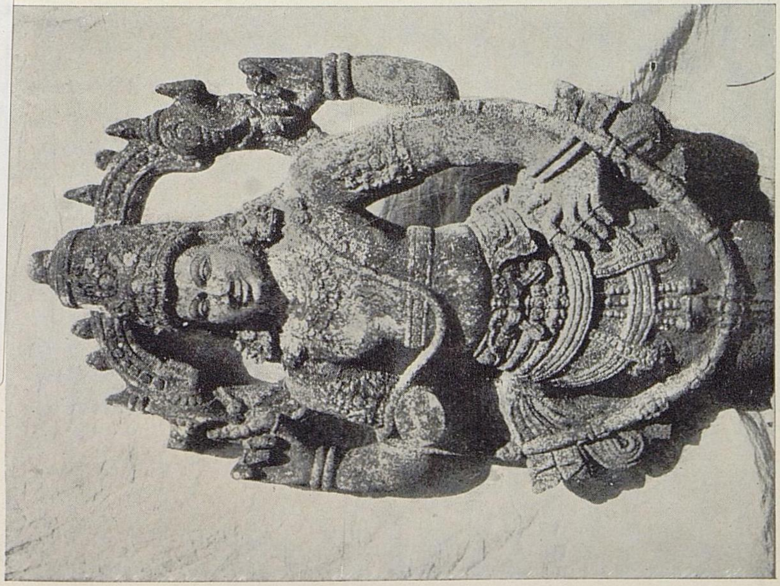
B. *Tiruvilvamala, Rāma-Lakshmaṇa temple: praṇāla with dwarf figure. See p. 43*



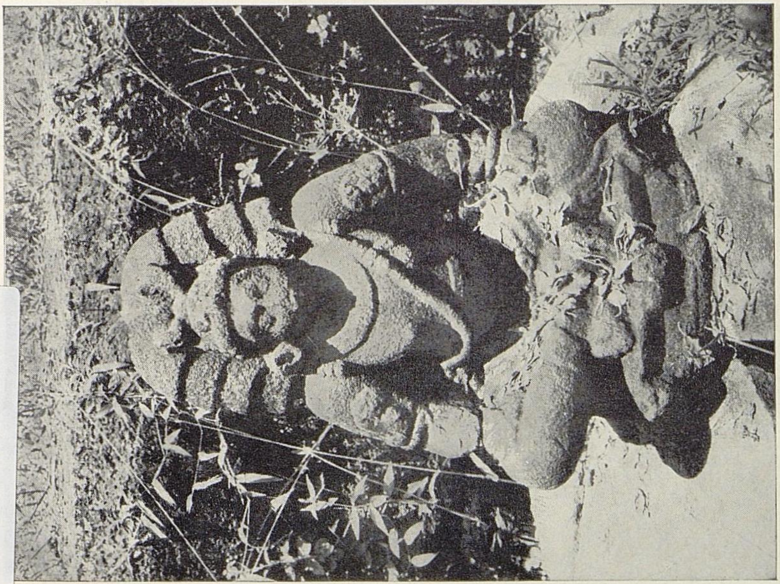
A. *Kaviyur, Śiva temple: wooden wall with carvings.* *See p. 66*

B. *Peruvanam, Śiva temple: wooden bracket figure.* *See p. 66*

PLATE IX

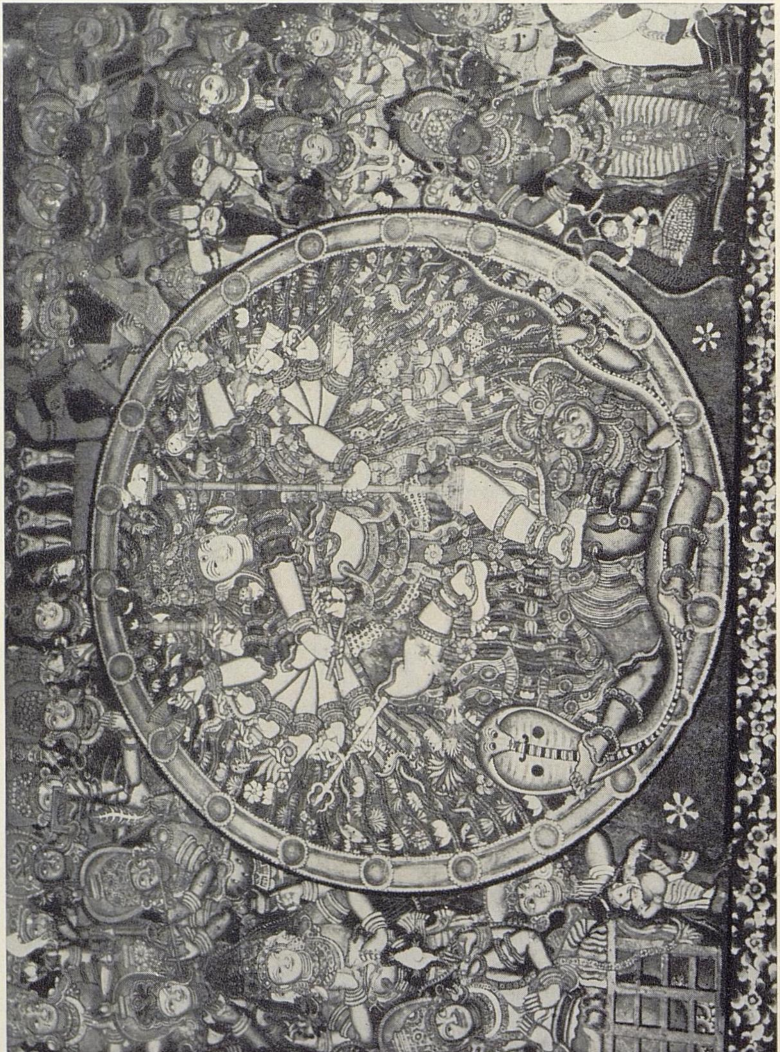


A. *Eramam: Vishṇu image. See p. 32*



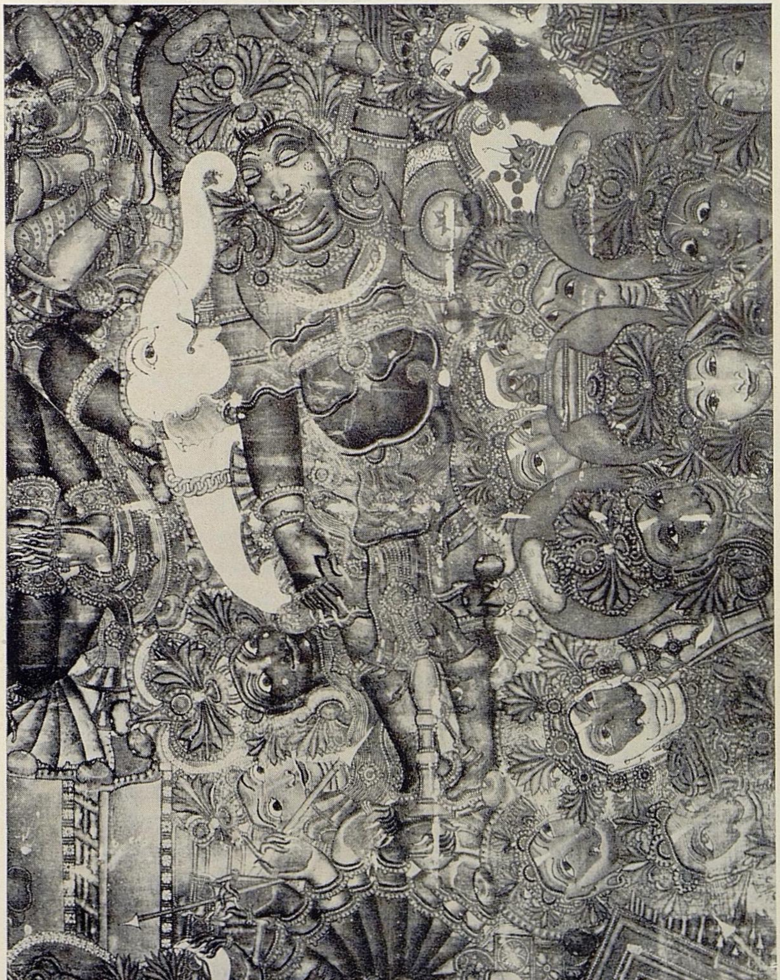
B. *Ramantali: Śāstā image. See p. 34*

PLATE X



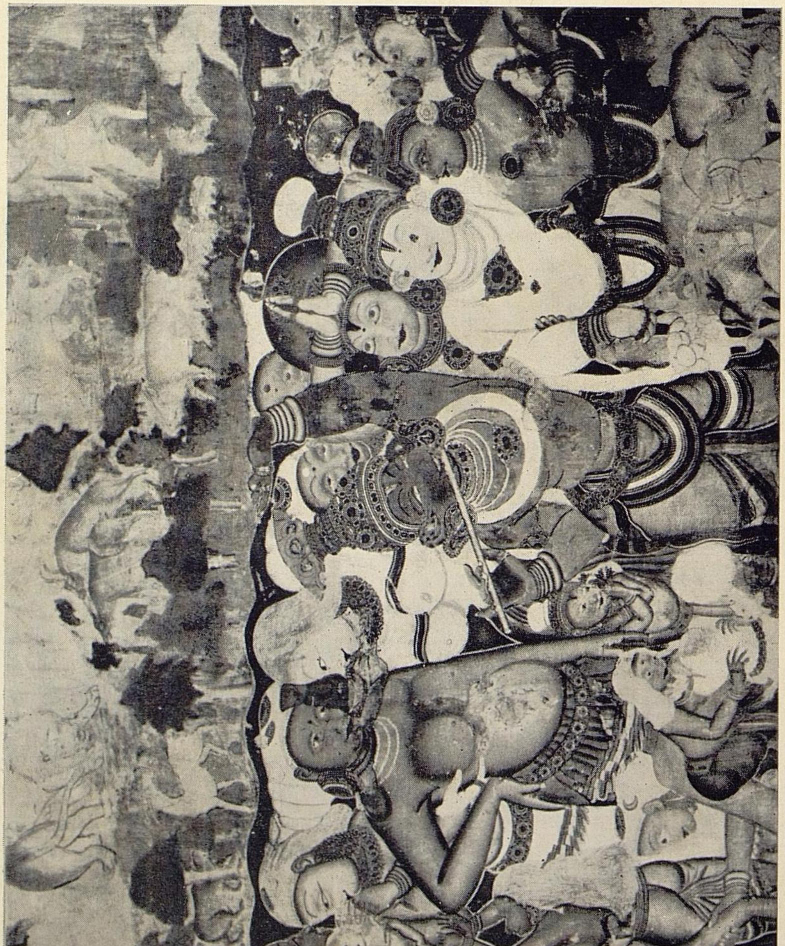
Ettumanur, Śiva temple: wall-painting showing dancing Śiva. *See pp. 67 and 69*

PLATE XI



Cochin, Mattancheri palace : wall-painting showing Kumbhakarṇa. *See pp. 55 and 69*

PLATE XII



Cochin, Mattancheri palace: wall-painting showing Kṛishṇa lifting Govardhana hill. See pp. 55 and 71

be dated at least to the ninth century. Again, in the Tiruvembilappaṉ temple at Venganellur, District Trichur, associated with a twelfth-century inscription, the interior arrangement consists of two rows of columns—the inner row having sixteen and the outer twenty columns—encircling the inner *vimāna*, raised on rectangular plan, and complete from *adhishṭhāna* to *stūpī*. Here the two rows of columns around the *garbha-gṛiha* divide the *pradakshiṇā-patha* into two segments. The outer circular wall of the temple has four functional doors, thus conforming to the *sarvatobhadra* type. To cite another example, the Trikoṭeśvara Mahādeva temple at Punalur, District Quilon, made of granite, houses a square *vimāna* with octagonal *grīvā* and *śikhara*. In the ambulatory all round, stand eight columns, two on each side of the *garbha-gṛiha*. The temple seems to have been constructed in Kollam 421 (A.D. 1245-46).

The Middle phase witnessed a spectacular growth in temple architecture in Kerala when innumerable temples were not only freshly built but quite a good number, as various temple-inscriptions show, underwent renovation. Many an important shrine of today had its beginning in this phase. For example, Vaḍakkunnātha shrine in the Vaḍakkunnātha temple-complex at Trichur, the Iraṭṭaiyappaṉ shrine (fig. 6) in the Śiva temple at Peruvanam, District Trichur, may be ascribed to the eleventh twelfth century. Both are circular shrines enclosing a square Drāviḍa *vimāna* as the *garbha-gṛiha* and having three functional doors. In both the cases, the back part of the shrine is meant for the consort of the respective gods. The circular Rāma

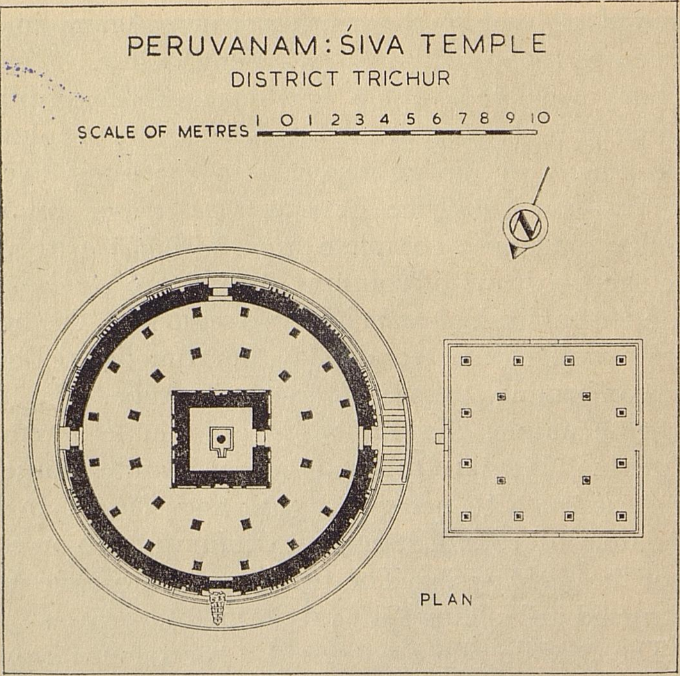


FIG. 6

temple at Triprayar, District Trichur, with three functional doors, may also be attributed to this phase as its *adhishṭhāna* bears an inscription of the eleventh century.

Into the apsidal temples was also incorporated the conception of miniature Drāviḍa *vimāna* as the *garbha-gṛiha* of the temple. The apsidal Vāmana temple at Kizhavellur (fig. 7), District Kottayam, is a characteristic example of this phase. Built of laterite slabs, it houses an apsidal *garbha-gṛiha* with a *gaja-prishṭhākāra* roof ('elephant's back') above it. A row of fourteen

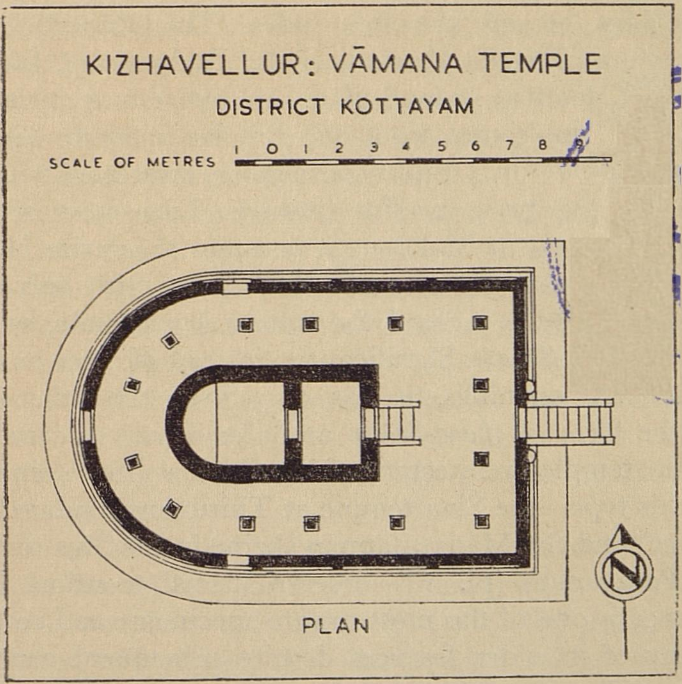


FIG. 7

columns runs along the *pradakshiṇā-patha*. The temple is associated with an inscription of A.D. 1035.

Several *dvitala* ('double-storeyed') *vimānas* also came into existence in this phase, a few extant remains of which may be described here. The Subrahmaṇya temple at Maniyur possesses much of its original character ascribable to the twelfth century. Moreover, the discarded Śāstā figure near the temple may be as old as the temple. It is a *dvitala vimāna* on a square plan enclosing a square inner shrine surrounded by two circumambulatory paths. Also, the temple has functional

openings on all the four sides. The Rājarājeśvara temple at Tricchambaram, of the Early phase, follows almost identical ground-plan. An interesting variation of this type comes from the Śrī Koḍavalam Vishṇu temple at Pullur, District Cannanore, associated with an inscription of the twelfth century. Like most of the temples in north Malabar, it is made of laterite blocks and is an example of a *sāndhāra vimāna* with only one *pradakshiṇā-patha* around the square *garbha-gṛiha*, which has its own *śikhara*. Significantly, instead of three or four functional openings, it has only two, the other two in the form of *ghana-dvāras* or 'false doors' so common in the temple-architecture of Kerala. Two more temples of this type—the Śiva temple at Thiruvanchikulam (see cover) and the Māḍattilappaṉ shrine in the Śiva temple at Peruvanam (pl. V)—deserve special mention. The former is one of the most ornate specimens and retains many of its older features despite subsequent renovations. The latter is a *tritala* ('three-storeyed') temple with octagonal *grīvā* and *śikhara* which are unique features in the temple architecture of Kerala.

Alongside the Kerala style of temples were built a few typical south Indian temples, specially in south Kerala. The all-stone temple, known popularly as Kaṭṭilmāḍam, at Chalapuram, in District Palghat, is a square *nirandhāra* temple built in chaste Drāviḍa style (pl. III B), with octagonal *grīvā* and *śikhara*, both made out of one piece of stone. There is an important temple-complex at Tiruvallam, near Trivandrum, dedicated to Paraśurāma, in which circular Drāviḍa *vimānas* occur side by side with the Kerala style of temples.

The Paraśurāma shrine, made of granite, suffered wholesale renovation whereas the adjacent Brahmā shrine in the same complex has an inscription on the *adhishṭhāna* dated to Kollam 399 (A.D. 1224) belonging to the Veṇāḍu ruler Vīra Keraḷavarmaṉ. The inner shrine of the latter is square on plan enclosed by a circular outer wall.

LATE PHASE.—A vast majority of the extant temples in Kerala fall in this phase (*c.* A.D. 1301-1800) notwithstanding the fact that many of them owed their origin to an earlier phase. No further development can be noticed so far as the general plan of the individual shrines is concerned but the layout of the entire complex must have developed into greater complexity and elaboration.

In architectural layout of such an evolved Kerala temple, the *śrī-kovil* forms the nucleus, while the other components like the open-air *pradakshiṇā-patha*, the cloistered *nālambalam*, the *viḷakkumāḍam* affixed with a galaxy of lamps, paved outer *pradakshiṇavari* and *prākāra* or *prākāras* are aligned in orderly succession centred round the main shrine or shrines. Though the *śrī-kovil* may variously be square, rectangular, apsidal, circular and even elliptical, the arrangements of other components follow invariably a concentric rectangular alignment. As a general rule, the central shrine is fronted by a square *namaskāra-maṇḍapa* with a pyramidal roof. In some temples, specially in south Kerala, one may find another pillared structure, the *balikkal-maṇḍapa* in front of the *vaḻiambalam*, a wing of the *nālambalam*, providing the main entrance into the temple proper. Facing the *balikkal-maṇḍapa*, which enshrines the main *balipīṭha*,

stands the *dīpa-stambha* and in some cases *dhvaja-stambha*. Close by, in bigger complexes, one finds a large edifice, the *kūttambalam*, meant for dance, musical performances and other recitals. In larger complexes, the outer *prākāra*, which may enclose even the temple-tank (*teppakuḷam*) is pierced on all the four sides by *gopuras*, with multiple roofs covered with tiles. Unlike those of the later south Indian temples, these are not tall and imposing gateways (pl. VI B).

In the last phase, the concept of composite shrines as well as the practice of dedicating one complex to more than one god reached the culmination. The Vaḍakkunnātha temple at Trichur (above, p. 37) is a multi-shrined complex having three principal shrines dedicated to Vaḍakkunnātha *alias* Ten-Kailāsanātha, Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa, and Rāma—the Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa shrine having beautiful murals of the seventeenth century delineating graphically the story of the Mahābhārata (below, p. 68). Apart from the principal shrines, many complexes were added later on with subsidiary shrines, ranging in number from one to ten. For example, the Rāma temple at Triprayar has one subsidiary shrine dedicated to Ayyappaṉ, and that too, situated outside the *nālambalam* enclosure. In the Vaḍakkunnātha complex, the Ayyappaṉ or Śāstā shrine (pl. VI B), apsidal on plan, is also similarly located, thereby indicating the god's dethronement from the higher position enjoyed earlier. Besides the Ayyappaṉ shrine, there is a small Drāviḍa *vimāna*, dedicated to Kṛishṇa, near the *kūttambalam* in the Vaḍakkunnātha temple at Trichur. The number of sub-shrines in some complexes increased to

no less than ten as in the case of the Śiva temple at Kandiyur, District Alleppey. There are about eight sub-shrines in the complexes of Vāmanamūrti Mahāvishṇu temple, which is circular on plan, at Trikkakara, District Ernakulam, and the Śiva temple at Thiruvanchikulam, District Trichur.

During the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, lofty enclosures, sculptured corridors and the ornate *balikkal-maṇḍapas* in some temples practically concealed the view of the main shrine. Belonging to this stage of development are the Sthāṇunāthasvāmī temple at Suchindram, District Kanyakumari, and the Padmanābhasvāmī temple at Trivandrum where the main temple is completely hidden behind the vast quadrangular enclosures, the nuclei of both the establishments dating back to the ninth or tenth century. At Tiruvattar, District Kanyakumari, the open outer *pradakshiṇā-patha* of the Ādikeśavaperumāḷ temple has been converted into a covered passage having two hundred and twenty-two pillars carved with *dīpa-lakshmīs* and other reliefs. It was this period which saw the rise of highly embellished *balikkal-maṇḍapa* as is found in the Śiva temple, elliptical on plan, at Vaikam, District Kottayam, and the Janārdana temple at Varkala. So much sculptural embellishments appear to be incongruous with the general pattern of the Kerala temples where plastic decorations are confined mainly to banisters (pl. VII A) and the *praṇālas*, the latter being generally associated with a dwarf figure (pl. VII B).

F. Churches

Tradition has it that Apostle St. Thomas, who is said to have landed at Muziris in A.D. 52, built seven churches in Kerala. There is, however, no archaeological evidence to substantiate it, more so because there are hardly any historical remains, but for the megalithic monuments and some Roman coins, which may be dated to that period. It is also not known for certain if the idea of church, in the sense it is understood now, developed at all in that Apostolic age. In West Asia and Italy the ecclesiastical architecture began in the first quarter of the fourth century A.D., and soon after the idea might have travelled to Kerala. And that Kerala had some churches in the sixth century is testified by the statement of Cosmas Indicopleustes, the Byzantine monk.

The first wave of Christianity to Kerala must have come from West Asia. Inscriptions for instance of the times of Sthāṇu Ravi (844-85) and of Vīra-Rāghava Chakravarti (A.D. 1225) clearly reveal that the Christian communities enjoyed many rights and privileges. They also played a vital role in the trade and commerce of the medieval Kerala. The famous Tarisapalli grant dated in the fifth regnal year of Sthāṇu Ravi registers the gift of vast properties to the Church of Teresa, no longer in existence, which was built by the priest Maruvan Sapir Iso, hailing from Nineveh.

But nothing is known about the church-architecture of these early Christian communities, who were far away from the main streams of contemporary ecclesiastical

architecture of the Roman world. That does not mean that they had lost contact with Persia, and West Asian countries. The bishops for Kerala were brought from Persia and Mesopotamia till the sixteenth century when the Portuguese put a stop to this practice. All the churches here followed Syrian liturgy: the Orthodox Syrian Church at Kottayam still preserves a stone cross inscribed with a Pahlavi inscription.

It is widely known that early churches in the Roman world, including West Asia, imitated the plan of civil basilica having a semi-circular termination, and with certain modifications for better fulfilment of liturgical needs. On the other hand, Kerala adapted, by and large, a temple-plan comprising a four-sided sanctuary fronted by a larger pillared hall, which, in the Christian tradition, became chancel and nave respectively. Similarly, the tower over the sanctuary possibly soared higher than that of the nave, as in the Hindu temple the *śikhara* above the *garbha-gṛiha* has the maximum height. This type of church-architecture can still be seen in Kerala. As a matter of fact, what is stated above is based on the study of the surviving trends.

A few more peculiarities of the ecclesiastical architecture of Kerala may be cited here. In the Orthodox Syrian Church at Chengannur, Peter and Paul occupy the places of the *dvārapālas* of a Hindu shrine. A portico, called *śālā*, in front is often provided to shelter pilgrims during festive occasions. The absence of benches or pews reflects a sense of adjustment to the prevailing Indian custom of squatting or kneeling on the floor. Again, many Syrian churches have an impressive

gateway with a musical hall above, which may be an adaption from the Brahmanical practices in temples. Furthermore, the open-air cross in front of the main entrance recalls the tradition of placing *balipīṭha* or *dīpa-stambha* near the entrance to a Hindu shrine. It is well-known that Vasco da Gama mistook a temple of Kālī to be a Christian church, and it shows that architecturally the difference between the two in that period was hardly recognizable to a stranger. In summary, the church-architecture in Kerala evolved out of an indigenous building tradition, and basically the same trend continued till recently despite the impact of later ecclesiastical architecture of Europe.

It was the Portuguese who introduced here the new trend of church-architecture in the sixteenth century, followed by the latinization of churches in Kerala. Santo Antonio, now St. Francis Church (fig. 8), at Cochin is the earliest church built in India in the new tradition. It has been raised on a plan similar to the earlier types prevalent in Kerala, though in elevation it has discarded the idea of dominating tower over the chancel. Being a modest, unpretentious structure, it is of no particular architectural merit, but it stands as a landmark of history and church-architecture of India; numerous churches have been built on the Indian soil keeping the St. Francis Church as the model. It will, therefore, not be out of place if its brief history and description are sketched below.

The exact date of the construction of the St. Francis Church is not known. Presumably, it owes its origin to the Franciscan Friars who accompanied the Portuguese

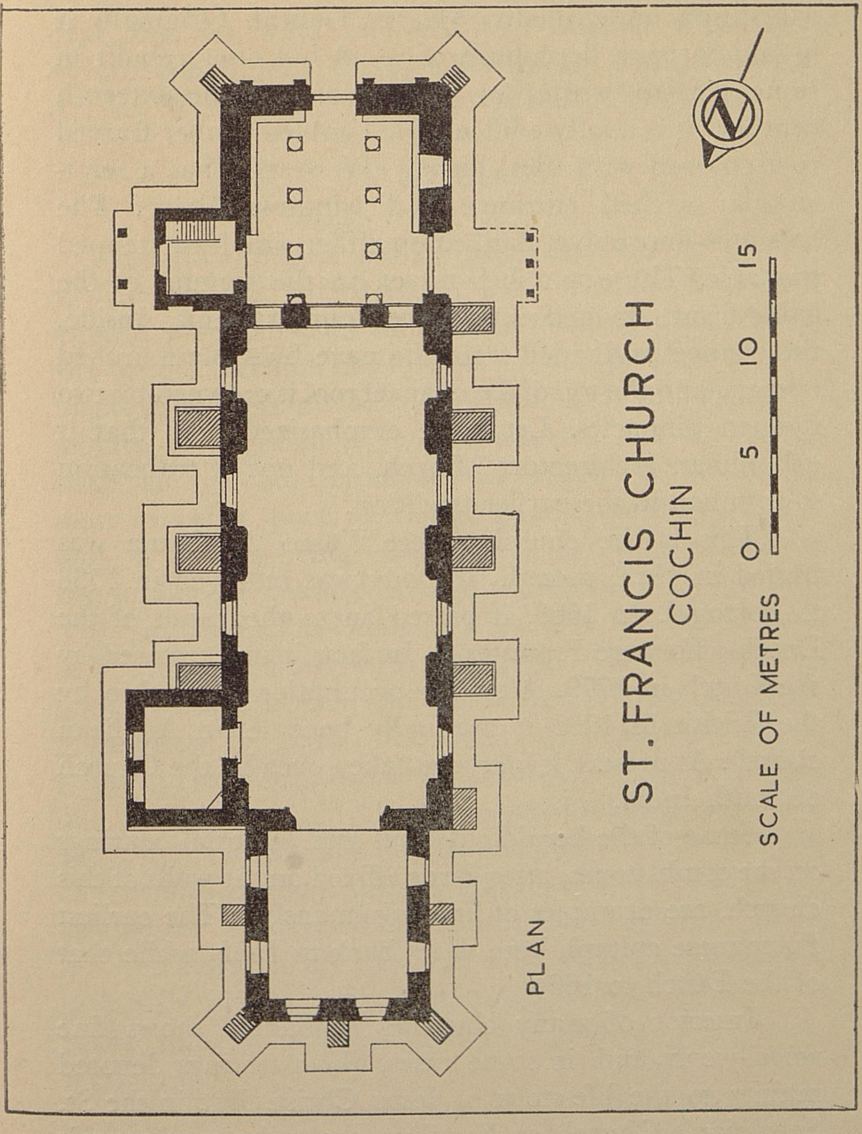


FIG. 8

expedition under Pedro Alvarez Gabral. Originally it is said to have been built of wood but later rebuilt in stone, perhaps within the first few years of the sixteenth century. It is a lofty edifice with a gabled timber-framed roof covered with tiles. Facing the west, it has a semi-circular arched entrance and windows above. The façade is impressive, flanked on either side by a stepped pinnacle. There is a bell-turret on the summit of the gable-front, divided into three compartments. Inside, the chancel is divided from the nave by a plain arched opening and the top of the chancel roof is crowned by two stepped pinnacles. Let it be emphasized here that it exhibits an architecture of arch, and not of trabeation so common in the earlier tradition.

This is the church where Vasco da Gama was buried in 1524, though his body was removed in 1538 to Portugal. In 1663, it passed on to the hands of the Dutch who were Protestants. In fact, it was restored by the Dutch in 1779. After the occupation of Cochin by the British in 1795 it gradually became an Anglican church. At present it has been taken over by the Church of South India.

Some of the heraldic designs and armorial bearings on the tomb-stones, afterwards affixed on the walls of this church, are examples of fine workmanship. The earliest Portuguese epitaph here dates back to 1562, while that of the Dutch to 1664.

Interior of many churches of Kerala shows fine wood-works and, in some cases, also paintings devoted mainly to the life-story of Jesus Christ. But in the St. Sebastian's Church at Kanjhur are to be seen murals

depicting the fight between the English and Ṭīpū Sūlṭān: the copies of these paintings are available with the Sri Mulam Chitrasala, Town Hall, Trichur.

G. Mosques

Kerala occupies hardly any place in the history of Indo-Islamic architecture. For, whereas there are innumerable mosques in Kerala none of them shows any grand architectural form so conspicuous in the Imperial and Provincial styles of the Indo-Islamic architecture throughout the sub-continent. On the other hand, Kerala came in contact with Islam perhaps earlier than in many parts of India. Even there is a tradition that a Chera king Cheramān Perumāḷ embraced Islam and also made a voyage to Mecca. It is also said that one Malik-ibn-Dīnār was the first Muslim to land at Cranganur along with his family. As the tradition goes, he built the first mosque there, followed by eight more along the coast. The historicity of such traditions is hard to establish. At the same time, the extant mosque at Cranganur, a lofty two-storeyed building with tiled roofs, does not disclose any feature that may be dated to the seventh century A.D. Its outer walls are built on an *adhishṭhāna* similar to any Brahmanical temple. There are corridors on all the four sides of the central hall, meant for prayers, with a *miḥrāb* on the western wall. In many respects this is a common plan of mosques in Kerala.

It was undoubtedly the Arab traders who introduced Islam to Kerala during the eighth or ninth

century. Numerous Arab travellers sailed to Malabar in the ninth and tenth centuries, and it seems that at the time of Sulaimān's visit—he wrote his Silsilat-ut-Tawārīkh in A.D. 851—Muslim population in Kerala was negligible, if not totally non-existent. On the contrary, Ḥaukal, writing in the tenth century, refers to mosques where Muslims offered prayers. The alleged discovery of a Muslim inscription of A.H. 166 from Pantalayini Kollam, near Quilandy, District Kozhikode, may point to the same conclusion.

The mosque-architecture in Kerala must have reached considerable heights, as the epigraphical data may show, between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries—the period of Arab supremacy in the maritime trade with Malabar. In the graveyard called Parapalli at Kollam, District Kozhikode, are to be seen a number of epitaphs of the thirteenth century. Again, there are at least two graves in the compound of the Jāmi'-Masjid at Madayi belonging to the same period. Further, the mosque known as Kollampalli at Quilon has an inscription on the *miḥrāb* registering its gift by one Amīr Aḥmad, son of Abul'l-Fatḥ of Kāzrūn, in A.H. 726 (A.D. 1326). A bilingual inscription from the Muchchandipalli, Calicut, ascribable to the thirteenth century, clearly states that the mosque and the quarters for the *imām* and *mu'adhdhin* were built by Shihābu'd-Dīn Raiḥān, a freed slave (*'atiq*), out of his own money.

Some epigraphical evidences on the renovation of mosques are also available. For example, the Parpil Muhyiu'd-Dīn's mosque at Calicut (Kozhikode) was built in A.H. 958 (A.D. 1551) and renovated in A.H. 1197

(A.D. 1782-83). The Kannamkulangara mosque at Chaliyam, District Kozhikode, has yielded an inscription giving A.H. 756 (A.D. 1355) as the date of the reconstruction of the mosque. To cite another example, an inscription from the Jāmi'-Masjid at Quilandy, District Kozhikode, speaks of the construction of the mosque in A.H. 999 (1590-91) and its reconstruction by the people of the town in A.H. 1186 (A.D. 1772-73).

As stated earlier (p. 49), the mosques in Kerala are generally covered structures comprising a large prayer hall in the centre, with covered verandahs on all the sides. They resemble the storeyed residential buildings of that area, and have their walls made of laterite blocks. Many mosques in Kerala share the same features as the ones noticed there in the Brahmanical tradition. Logan records that the mosque at Pantalayini Kollam had its dome covered, like the Brahmanical temples, with sheets of copper. The Jāmi'-Masjid at Tannur, District Malappuram, has a gate or *gopura* covered with copper sheeting. Of more than two dozen mosques at Ponnani, District Malappuram, the most important is the Jāmi'-Masjid, a three-storeyed building with tiled roofs. Like the *stūpīs* of the Brahmanical temples it is also crowned by five pinnacles. A small structure, known as Makhdūm's house (built in A.H. 1131 or A.D. 1718-19), within the complex, has its roof covered with copper sheets and is also pinnacled. But the mosque was constructed in A.H. 956 (A.D. 1549-50) and perhaps renovated in A.H. 1167 (A.D. 1753-54). It is significant to note that like the mosque at Cranganur it has a basement similar to the *adhishṭhāna* of the

Brahmanical temples. Pillars near the main entrance, like those in the Brahmanical tradition, show alternately square and octagonal sections. At the same time, it has to be borne in mind that some of the mosques, unlike the temple-tradition, show the employment of arches. Thus, the outer walls of the Jāmi'-Masjid at Ponnani are pierced on all the sides by doors while the inner walls have several arched openings.

Wood has been extensively used in the superstructure and in the construction of ceilings. But the wooden pulpits (*mimbar*) in mosques are by far the best examples of wood-carvings associated with the Islamic architecture in Kerala. There are a few inscriptional evidences also about the construction of and repairs to pulpits. For instance, an inscription on a wooden plank on the pulpit (*mimbar*) in the Jāmi'-Masjid at Beypore, District Kozhikode, records its construction in A.H. 1132 (A.D. 1719-20) by a ship-master (*nākhudā*). The one at the Mithqāl mosque at Calicut was built in A.H. 1088 (A.D. 1677-78), while the pulpit in the Jāmi'-Masjid at the same place was repaired by a ship-master in A.H. 1094 (A.D. 1682-83).

Compared to the pulpits, the mosques themselves are unpretentious monuments and completely utilitarian in character. The closed prayer hall and sloping tiled roofs have been used, no doubt, to combat the phenomenon of heavy rainfall but this alone does not fully explain their austere architectural features. In other parts of India, the Indo-Islamic architecture drew its main inspiration from the Persian and Turkish traditions, unsurpassed in the architectural wealth and artistic

vision. This trend never reached the shores of Malabar where the Arabic tradition of simplicity of structural form had combined itself with the indigenous style of Kerala, thereby giving rise to a new type of mosque-architecture. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the language of the inscriptions of Kerala throughout is Arabic, while that of the other parts of India is generally Persian.

H. Synagogues

Kerala came to have in its midst from a very early period a community of Jews who had their first settlement at Cranganur. As the famous Jewish copper-plate of A.D. 1000 testifies, Bhāskara Ravivarmaṉ I (962-1020) gave several concessions to the Jewish merchant Joseph Rabban. The copper-plate is preserved to this day in the Jew's synagogue at Mattancheri, built in about 1567. Because of the persecution by the Portuguese, the Jews left Cranganur and settled at Cochin in 1565. Perhaps in A.D. 1615, as a Hebrew record there shows, was constructed the synagogue at Parur. Anyway, of the extant Jewish monuments in Kerala, the Jews' synagogue at Mattancheri, Cochin, is the most important. Architecturally, it is nothing but a tall building with sloping tiled roofs. It has a mosaic floor but without any column in the interior. In the mid-eighteenth century, Ezekiel Rahabi built a clock tower and paved the floor of the synagogue with hand-painted tiles of willow pattern (every one of them different) brought all the way from Canton, China.

I. Palaces

Of the extant palaces in Kerala, the most important are the Padmanābhapuram palace, District Kanyakumari, and the Mattancheri palace at Cochin. To this list may be added the Kṛishṇapuram palace, near Kayankulam, District Alleppey, built by Mārṭṭāṇḍa Varma (1729-58). These are examples of domestic architecture in which wood has been used in plenty. Incidentally, the *Thekke-kottaram*, situated just outside the main building-complex of the Padmanābhapuram palace, is made entirely of wood. Like any other secular or religious architecture in Kerala, they have simple, unpretentious exterior, though the interior, with mural paintings and fine wood-carvings, bears stamp of simplicity but elegance.

(i) *The Mattancheri palace*

The Mattancheri palace at Cochin has an excellent location with the panorama of the backwaters on the east and the tall synagogue of the Jews on the south. It was built by the Portuguese in A.D. 1557 for the use of the Rājā of Cochin. A century later, it underwent extensive renovation in the hands of the Dutch. That was why the building was also known as the Dutch palace.

The double-storeyed building with a quadrangular plan aligned around the Paḻayannūr Bhagavatī temple in the centre, follows mainly the plan of *nālukeṭṭus* ('four buildings') with a courtyard in the centre, a plan

common in the domestic architecture of Kerala. Besides the Bhagavatī temple in the centre, there is another temple-complex dedicated to Vishṇu and Śiva to the south of the palace. A large masonry tank to the west of the palace can also be seen. The entire structural complex is enclosed by a high wall pierced on the east and the west by an entrance.

A flight of steps from the south takes one to the covered porch which opens into the spacious Coronation hall, noted for its carved ceiling. It has, however, no wall-paintings. Dresses, turbans and three palanquins belonging to the royal Cochin family are now exhibited here. There are three bed-chambers in the upper storey, apart from other rooms. To the west of the Coronation hall is a bed-chamber (*paḷḷiyara*) with low wooden ceiling whose walls are fully covered with murals executed in traditional style. There are forty to forty-five scenes, mainly devoted to the story of the Rāmāyaṇa (pl. XI) beginning from the *putrakāmeshṭiyāga* ('sacrifice wishing the birth of a child') to Sītā's return from captivity (below, p. 69).

Six large murals are in the room to the south of the Coronation hall and these representations include the scene of coronation of Rāma, Guruvayur Appaṉ and so on. The room is called *kovinithalam* or 'staircase-room', leading to the bed-chamber, meant for ladies, in the lower storey. To the north of the *kovinithalam* is another room with only one painting representing Vishṇu as Vaikuṇṭhanātha of the Tripunittura temple. A spacious hall further north exhibits at present some of the paraphernalia of the royal house of

Cochin, while the hall to the east contains some of their weapons, a swing and some furniture.

Two rooms in the lower storey, meant for the bed-chambers of the ladies also have murals; one of them portrays in bare outline the story of Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, and the adjacent room contains five large-sized murals devoted to various *purāṇic* themes (pl. XII). The lower storey has many small rooms, apart from a kitchen and a dining hall on one side.

(ii) *The Padmanābhapuram palace*

The palace of the Travancore rulers at Padmanābhapuram is also famous for murals and wood-works in the interior. Located within a fortified area, roughly square in outline, the buildings inside the palace-complex do not show any well-knit ground-plan. Perhaps its growth was spread over different periods of time, the *Thai-kottaram* ('Mother's palace') being the earliest of the buildings here. It follows practically the plan of the *nālukeṭṭus* with a courtyard in the centre. Of the several edifices with gabled tiled roofs, the most noteworthy are the entrance-hall, the council-chambers, the theatre, the *pūjā-maṇḍapa* and the stone temple of Sarasvatī with a *navarātri-maṇḍapa* in front. Murals covering more than forty principal panels portraying scenes from the Hindu mythology are in the third floor of the *Upparikkā-māḷikā*. The most important of the murals are the ones featuring Anantaśāyī Vishṇu, Lakshmīnārāyaṇa, Ardhanārīśvara, Kṛishṇa with *gopīs*, Naṭarāja and so on.

Paintings apart, some of the wood-works show delicate craftsmanship though some amount of stylization is evident in the perforated screens, the floriated brackets, along with *dhatura*-flower pendants, and other carvings. A few cots kept inside show intricate designs while the beams and the rafters are encased with wood-work of flowing pattern.

J. Forts

Kerala has innumerable forts and redoubts some of which deserve special attention by virtue of their association with the history of Kerala and the expansion of the various European powers in this part of the west coast. In all likelihood, the fort at Pallipuram, on the northern end of the Vypin island, north of Cochin, is one of the three forts built by the Portuguese in the early years of the sixteenth century. As the fort at Cochin, whose foundation was laid on the 27th of September, 1503, and that of Kothapuram, in Cranganur, are in complete decay, the one at Pallipuram, known as Aḻikkoṭṭai, alone survives more or less intact. It is a hexagonal structure made of laterite blocks with a gateway built of dressed granite. The main purpose of this fort was to guard the entry into the backwater from the north. These forts along with those of Quilon and Cannanore constituted the chain of fortresses which could be defended easily from the sea.

The Fort St. Angelo at Cannanore was built originally by the Portuguese Viceroy Dom Francesco d' Almeida. Situated on a rocky promontory, it is a massive

structure, roughly triangular in plan, built of laterite blocks. The sea surrounds it on all the three sides, while a dry ditch runs on the landward side of the fortress. It was captured by the British in December 1790 as a follow-up action against the forces of Ṭīpū Sulṭān.

The British had earlier organized the attack against Ṭīpū from the side of Palghat whose strategic position was vastly improved by the fortification that Ḥaidar Alī had raised with the help of the French advisers. Square on plan with a moat all round, it had thick walls and strong bastions, made mostly of long blocks of granite. It was finally occupied by the British on the 22nd September 1790. This fort at Palghat was an inland fortress suited to withstand the artillery bombardment.

The British, however, extended their spheres of influence mainly from the Fort of Anjengo, District Trivandrum and the Fort of Tellicherry, District Cannanore. In 1690, the East India Company was allowed by the Rani of Attingal to build a fort at Anjengo and it was raised in 1695. Square in alignment, it served as the first signalling station for ships arriving from England; also, it was an important depot for military stores during the Karnataka wars. But its main purpose was to facilitate the collection of pepper, coir and other trading articles. There are many tomb-stones at Anjengo, the earliest of which dates back to A.D. 1704.

It seems that the Keladi Nayakas (*c.* 1500-1763) who had their capitals variously at Keladi, Ikkeri and Bednore, in District Shimoga, Karnataka, built a few forts in Hosdrug-Kasargod area of District Cannanore. The most important of them is the Bekal fort at Pallikere,

perched on the steep bank of the sea. Made of laterite slabs, it is roughly polygonal on plan and is possibly the biggest surviving fort of Kerala.

3. SCULPTURAL ART AND PAINTINGS

KERALA POSSESSES A FAIRLY RICH HERITAGE OF artistic traditions which found expression, apart from paintings, through various materials like stone, metal, wood, stucco and ivory. Stone and metal sculptures began in the eighth-ninth centuries, but so far there is no evidence to date the other materials before the late medieval times. Not much is known about the art of terracottas during the different phases of the history of Kerala, while the stucco-works are confined to some minor decorative elements in some temples. However, in the temple of Śrī Anantapadmanābhasvāmī at Anantapuram, in Kasaragod Taluk of District Cannanore, are still preserved some large-sized stucco-images of various forms of seated Vishṇu in the *deva-koshṭhas* of the central shrine. The temple, situated inside a huge tank, is associated with a Tuḷu inscription engraved in Malayalam characters of the fifteenth century. So far as the ivory-carving is concerned, no example prior to the eighteenth century is known from Kerala though some authorities claim to have found its references in biblical and classical works. Whatever may be the period of their beginnings, sculptures in wood and the art of painting are the two most dominant artistic traditions in Kerala, far surpassing in quantum the creations in stone and metal.

A. Stone sculptures

The first phase of sculptural art in stone includes the series of beautiful bas-reliefs in the Brahmanical

rock-architecture of Kerala represented by Kaviyur, Vilinjam, Kottukal and other caves in south Kerala (above, pp. 19-25), where it was inspired primarily by the Pāṇḍya plastic tradition. In the sculptures of the northern group of cave-temples, as typified by Irunilancode (above, p. 23), the influence of the Pallava or the Atiya tradition, the latter having its full efflorescence in the Namakkal caves, District Salem, can be seen. Images of Buddha, by and large, constitute a series which overlaps chronologically with the Brahmanical ones associated with the cave-temples. On the other hand, the available evidence shows a contemporaneity of the Jaina images and rock-sculptures with the early structural temples.

The sculptural tradition here had been mainly through the medium of granite which was popularized in the far south by the Pallavas of Kāñchī and the Pāṇḍyas of Madurai. As a plastic medium laterite was also employed in Kerala, for the standing images in the *deva-koshṭhas* of the Kṛishṇa temple at Thirukulasekharapuram are carved out of the same stone. Though now heavily plastered, they still retain the grace and stance of the Pallava tradition of the ninth century. Laterite, sometimes dressed and nicely polished, has been used for decorative mouldings of the *adhishṭhāna* as well. Mention has already been made of the occurrence of the Brahmanical images in granite ascribable to the ninth or tenth centuries on stylistic considerations (above, pp. 25-34).

During the eleventh or twelfth century, the impact of the Choḷa art was felt in Kerala. Representations

of deities, dance-scenes on banisters (pl. VII A), and the dwarf-figures accompanying the *praṇāla* (pl. VII B) are undoubtedly inspired by the imperial Choḷa tradition. The former motifs are common in south Kerala but rare in the northern part where the figures of lion are carved on either side of the banisters. But the practice of keeping a dwarf-figure in the pose of drinking the *abhisheka* ('lustral') water from the *praṇāla* is common throughout Kerala. Some of the dance-scenes like the ones on the banisters of the Vishṇu temple at Trivikramangalam, District Trivandrum, the Subrahmaṇya temple at Kidangur (pl. VII A), District Kottayam, and the subsidiary Kṛishṇa shrine in the Kṛishṇa temple-complex at Thirukulasekharapuram are examples of Choḷa art, all endowed with delicate modelling and rhythmic movement. Belonging to the same tradition is the standing two-armed image of Subrahmaṇya in the sanctum of the Subrahmaṇya temple at Vellanad, District Trivandrum. Even the Vishṇu image at Atiyannur may belong to the same phase.

The plastic art of Kerala had a sudden exuberance during the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries when several bigger structural complexes saw the emergence of the *balikkal-maṇḍapas* and cloistered passages richly adorned with sculptures of high quality. In some cases the columns of the *vaḷiambalam* are found embellished with reliefs of *dīpa-lakshmīs* and other figures. These sculptures and reliefs were inspired largely by the late Vijayanagara and the Nāyaka idioms. Beautiful reliefs from the Śiva temple at Vaikam, the Janārdana temple at Varkala,

the Sthāṇunāthasvāmī temple at Suchindram, the Padmanābhasvāmī temple at Trivandrum and others are products of this artistic impulse which spread from the Tamil country. Generally, these trends are confined to south Kerala, and such sculptures with graceful stance and lively facial expressions stand in contrast to the monotonous form and modelling of the stone *dvārapālas* carved out on wooden prototypes. The true Kerala tradition, which has a close relationship with the Hoysala art of Karnataka, is marked by extravagantly ornate figures common not only in stone sculptures but also in wood-carvings and paintings.

B. Metal sculptures

The earliest bronze image from Kerala ascribable to the early ninth century is the standing four-armed image of Vishṇu as Śrīnivāsa (ht. 16 cm) exhibited in the Trivandrum Museum. Belonging to the same Museum is another standing image (ht. 32 cm) having the appearance of Vishṇu. Unfortunately, the attributes in three out of the four hands are lost in this example, which is one of the finest and the well-finished bronzes in south India. Its *kirīṭa* is adorned with golden diadems; the *paṭṭa* round the waist bears a gem instead of the usual knot, and the girdle, too, is studded with gems.

The chief collection of bronzes comes from the Suchindram temple and these are taken to date from the twelfth century onwards. The figures of Sabhāpati or

Naṭarāja and his consort in the Sabhāpati shrine as well as of Śiva and Pārvatī in the shrine of Suchindraperumāḷ are excellent examples of the Choḷa tradition. There are a few Śaiva and Vaishṇava bronzes in the Trivandrum Museum which may be dated to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Bronzes executed in typical Kerala idiom possibly appeared during the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries. A sixteenth-century bronze, identified as Vishṇumāyā, now in the Trichur Museum, is a typical example of this phase, and is marked by heavy modelling, elaborate ornamentation and stylized features. In this period some of the metal images were executed in hollow-cast process, as is evident from the two *dvārapālas* in the Trichur Museum displaying the use of the same technique. These are ascribable to the seventeenth century and are perhaps made of five metals (*pañchaloha*). Again, there is a silver image of Śāstā in the Trivandrum Museum whose core is of wood, and strips of beaten silver, secured by silver nails, have been laid over it. A group of metal images, also of the seventeenth or eighteenth century, from the Śiva temple at Thiruvanchikulam, include figures of like Naṭarājā, Umāsahita Śiva, Cheramān Perumāḷ Nāyanār and Sundaramūrti Nāyanār. Of these, the Naṭarājā figure—the inscription on its base calls it *Sabhāpati* of Thiruvanchikulam—possesses all the grace and elegance, characteristic of such a composition, though is loaded with jewellery and has a conspicuous *prabhāvalī*.

The metal works of Kerala are not confined merely to the making of images in the round, for Kerala artists

transformed the commonplace rafter-shoes for covering the ends of wooden beams and rafters into fine artistic pieces. Excellent reliefs of deities and other decorative motifs are embossed on thin copper sheets. One of the rafter-shoes, exhibited in the Trivandrum Museum, bears an inscription of the fourteenth century.

C. Wood sculptures

Kerala is extremely rich in wood sculptures. Wooden bracket figures, carved ceilings of the *namaskāra-maṇḍapa*, sculptured columns, deities in the niches of the *grīvā* and decorative motifs in the façade of the hipped roofs are present universally in Kerala temples. Most of the *namaskāra-maṇḍapas* have ceilings depicting the *nava-grahas* or guardians of the eight regions, namely, Īśāna, Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirṛiti, Varuṇa, Vāyu and Kubera, with Brahmā in the coffer of the ceiling. Sometimes their rafters and beams are minutely carved with *purāṇic* narrations. Some of the *kūttambalams* like the ones in the Subrahmaṇya temple at Haripad, District Alleppey, and the Subrahmaṇya temple at Kidangur, District Kottayam, teem with fine wood sculptures portraying the epic and the *purāṇic* themes. Wooden walls, magnificently sculptured with well-defined panels and decorative motifs, are restricted to temples mainly of the Districts of Ernakulam, Alleppey and Kottayam.

The wood sculpture of Kerala has a somewhat realistic form, without any resemblance to the original

shape of the material. Here the craftsman has practically brought his creations to the level of stone-carvings. The majority are coloured, which hides the wooden texture, thereby infusing greater sense of plasticity and mobility. Like stone sculptures, the wood-carvings of Kerala followed the tradition of making images in the round as well as in reliefs. The latter category may well be compared with goldsmiths' art demanding subtle execution with great skill, patience and devotion. Walls of timber are invariably decorated with relief-sculptures both in miniature as well as in comparatively bigger size (pl. VIII A). So far as the subject matter is concerned the reliefs on walls include decorative patterns, mythological scenes and other narrations. Very often, as in Ettumanur and Chengannur, the Rāmāyaṇa scenes have been delineated with great deal of dramatic action and iconographic details. Such reliefs are very high, some of them appearing almost in the round. Individual scenes are arranged in rectangular panels, a practice followed also in the Kerala paintings. Figures are not always without expression and, in certain cases, the finish is marvellous.

Bracket figures (pl. VIII B), deities enshrined in the niches of the *grīvā*, and wooden *dvārapālas* are common examples of wooden sculpture in the round. A general feature of the decoration of the *grīvā* is to place the wooden images—occasionally stucco images also—of Brahmā, Indra, Dakshiṇāmūrti and Narasiṁha respectively on the north, east, south and west. Some of the temples like the Śiva temple at Peruvanam, the Rāma temple at Triprayar and others have exquisitely-carved bracket

figures depicting episodes from the Rāmāyaṇa, of which the Kirātārjunīya, appears to be the most favourite theme. Various deities are also represented in the bracket figures—perhaps as an influence of the Hoysala tradition from Karnataka—but the most oft-repeated motif is the *gaja-vyāla* figure, often in highly stylized form. Perforated *jāli*-windows in temples is yet another category of the wood-works of Kerala.

D. Paintings

It is generally held that the murals in the Tirunandikara cave, District Kanyakumari, are the earliest vestiges of this art in Kerala. But the cave-excavation as well as its paintings are decidedly of Pāṇḍya origin. The stupendous panel of Naṭarāja in the *gopura* of the Śiva temple at Ettumanur (pl. X) is taken to be the next landmark in the history of the Kerala school. It has been dated to the sixteenth century on the ground that the repairs to the temple were completed in A.D. 1545, and that the murals in the *gopura*, it is argued, cannot be later than this period. But the date of the renovation of temple cannot necessarily be taken as the date of the murals which might have been executed much later. In this huge panel, figures have been arranged in four distinct planes, a feature noticed also in the gigantic mural of the Gajendramoksha scene of the Kṛishṇapuram palace dated to the eighteenth century. The Naṭarāja panel of Ettumanur may not be far removed in point of time from the murals in the Kṛishṇapuram palace as they share several common features.

The Kerala school of paintings flourished throughout the present geographical limit of the state for at least two hundred years—an estimate based firmly on the epigraphical data. In the Pallimanna Śiva temple at Kumblanad, Wadakkanchery, are to be seen two painted verses which give the date of A.D. 1691, whereas the murals in the Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa temple of the Vaḍakkunnātha temple-complex at Trichur, were repaired, according to a painted inscription there, in A.D. 1731, by Kaṇṇan, the Nayar disciple of Nambūdiri Netra. Further, a painted inscription in the Pāṇḍava-Śāstā temple at Aimanam, near Kottayam, states that the wall-paintings were executed by Nārāyaṇapaṭṭar, a resident of Rāmavarmapuram-aharam, in Tiruvāndapuram-deśam and the disciple of Kaykkoṭṭa Nampūtiri in Kollam 1019 (A.D. 1844). In the face of these evidences, the main period of the Kerala school of paintings, which, unlike other parts of India, never produced any miniature, may be fixed from the middle of the seventeenth to the middle of the nineteenth centuries. Of course, there are temples even with twentieth century murals. There is yet another reason for dating the beginning of the tradition to the middle of the seventeenth century. In the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries, the revival of the *bhakti* movement, spearheaded by literary giants like Tuñchat Eḻuttachan, Melpattur Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭatiri (1560-1646) and Puntanam Nambūdiri (1547-1640) popularized various *purāṇic* themes which the artists later selected for creating their masterpieces.

The spatial distribution of the murals is also a significant pointer. There are innumerable temples with

paintings at places between Trivandrum in the south and Anantapuram, near Kumbla, in the north. Despite differences there exists a basic unity amongst this vast repertoire of murals not only in respects of form and colour but also in the use of minor motifs. To cite an instance, the Naṭarāja figure at Ettumanur is enclosed within a circular rim (pl. X), a motif noticed at Aimanam as well as at Edaseri Amsam in District Kozhikode. However, for the study of variations in styles, the murals of the Mattancheri palace offer the best scope available under the present circumstances.

The murals of the Mattancheri palace (above, pp. 54-56) distributed mainly in three halls known as *paḷḷiyara* or royal bed-chamber, *kovinithalam* and the ladies' chamber are generally ascribed to the latter half of the sixteenth, eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries respectively. Undoubtedly, the three sets have several distinguishing features but it has yet to be decided whether these are really due to chronological factors. The dating of the first phase is based on the slender evidence that the palace was built by the Portuguese in A.D. 1557. But it has to be remembered that the palace was thoroughly renovated by the Dutch some time in the second half of the seventeenth century. Hence, there is a greater likelihood of the first set of the murals coming into existence in the seventeenth century when the building took its final shape.

In the wall-paintings (pl. XI) of the royal bed-chamber every inch of space is painted with sombre colour; blue is absent while white has been used sparingly. Most of the panels here contain more than one

scene arranged vaguely in horizontal planes and depict in continuous sequence the Rāmāyaṇa story. There is an attempt to distinguish each figure, specially its upper part, by a beaded border in bluish green.

The murals of the *kovinithalam* lack completely the story-element because the panels are devoted to the portrayal of some divinity or the other like Mahālakshmī and Bhūtamālā, Anantaśāyī Vishṇu, Kūḍalmāṇikka-svāmī (the image of Vishṇu in the Irinjalakuda temple), Umāmaheśvara, Kirātamūrti, Rāma's coronation and so on. Most of them are painted in the same style as that of the royal bed-chamber, although the element of white is more in them. The white is produced by keeping the original surface unpainted or by subsequent scraping off of the colour; the former technique appears to have been used commonly. Nevertheless, somewhat different idiom has been followed in the delineation of the panels related to Rāma's coronation, Kirātamūrti and the 'unfinished' Vishṇu image. One can distinguish four noticeable changes in the second group of murals of the *kovinithalam* compared to those of the bed-chamber: the absence of continuous narration; the use of lighter shades; introduction of dance-poses; and the tendency to eliminate the beaded borders enclosing different figures. Some of these aspects have their full play in the wall-paintings of the ladies' chamber.

In the ground floor of the Mattancheri palace, there are two halls with wall-paintings: the one known as ladies' chamber has murals in lighter colours, while its adjacent room contains unfinished panels narrating the story of Kālidāsa's *Kumāra-sambhava*. The latter is

only in outline, drawn in red ochre over a white surface. The ground or the white surface is a specially prepared plaster having over it a thin wash of lime. Anyway, traces of such unfinished paintings can be seen in the Subrahmaṇya temple at Kidangur, District Kottayam, and in the ruined temple-complex at Teneri, District Palghat.

In the murals of the ladies' chamber, scenes are not congested, and further, the idea of space has been fully introduced by way of incorporating landscapes in the schemes. Shadings producing tonal effects and realistic colours have been employed, thus minutely delineating even minor features like nails, fingers, folds of clothes and so on. Figures, some of them in profile, are comparatively slimmer with attenuated waist, and are free from any bounding lines. All the panels here like Śiva dallying with Mohinī, Umāmaheśvara, Kṛishṇa with Gopīs, Kṛishṇa as Govardhanagiri-dhāri (pl. XII) and others breathe an air of freedom, charged with an undercurrent of sensuousness in spite of the fact that the themes are mythological. It is noteworthy that the modelling of the figures recalls that of Vaikam and Ettumanur.

Thus, the murals of the Mattancheri palace show two main trends: the ones in the royal bed-chamber follow the traditional line and those in the ladies' chamber exhibit certain features and techniques adapted from the European tradition. Perhaps two different schools of artists participated in painting the murals of the palace, and it appears to be a reasonable proposition considering the fact that the murals in a residential building cannot be a continuous process. That these

developments are not temporal in nature is evident from the wall-paintings of the Pāṇḍava-Śāstā temple at Aimanam, dated to the nineteenth century, where the traditional style has been fully employed although they lack instinctive appeal and structural quality.

The co-existence of more than one style may be assumed also in the murals of the Pallimanna Śiva temple at Kumblanad, Wadakkanchery. Most of the murals are divided into panels depicting deities like Śāstā and Harihara or a particular scene. But the western wall has two main narratives to portray—the top one devoted to Śiva-Pārvatī's marriage and the bottom one representing scenes from the Kirātārjunīya. The panel on the north-east corner, with an inscription, appears to be the outcome of another trend having affinities with the school responsible for the murals of the ladies' chamber. Murals of the Śiva temple at Thiruvanchikulam depicting Veṇugopāla, Rāma with Bharata and Lakshmaṇa and other representations bear influence of the same trend. On the contrary, wall-paintings delineating vividly the story of the Mahābhārata on the Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa temple, where panelling has not been followed, as well as various independent panels of the Rāma temple at Triprayar are inspired by the traditional school. Some of the paintings, which are not well-preserved in the Anantapadmanābhasvāmī temple at Anantapuram, near Kumbla, are devoted to the representation of floral motifs alongside the figural art, which are portrayed in rectangular panels.

On the whole, the mural paintings of Kerala are the products of two main schools of artists—one of them

being certainly influenced by the European tradition (above, p. 71). It is significant to note that definite records and paintings regarding the existence of a minor style under the patronage of the East India Company are available in the Indian Office Library, London. These are drawn in European style and, those too, by the Malabar artists in the early years of the nineteenth century. Executed in a restrained palette, of brown, fawn, white, green and yellow, these are living examples of how the Malabar artists adjusted themselves to the British needs. And this very trend must have infiltrated into traditional style bringing about certain changes in the form, structure and in the general mode of artistic expressions.

GLOSSARY OF INDIAN ARCHITECTURAL TERMS

Adhishṭhāna: basement of a temple, pillared hall or similar religious structure. It consists of moulded tiers, each tier having a distinct name like *upāna*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kaṇṭha*, *paṭṭikā* and so forth.

Ardha-maṇḍapa: a hall immediately preceding the shrine.

Bāhya-bhitti: outer wall of the shrine.

Bali-pīṭha: platform on which an oblation is placed. In Kerala temples, there is one principal *balipīṭha* in front of the main temple-entrance.

Balikkal-maṇḍapa: the pillared hall raised above the principal *bali-pīṭha*.

Deva-koshṭha: niche enshrining a deity on the shrine-wall.

Dīpa-lakshmī: an art-motif representing a lady holding a lamp.

Dīpa-stambha: pillar for lamp or lamps.

Dhvaja-stambha: flag-staff.

Dvārapāla: door-keeper.

Gaja-vyāla: a motif depicting the combination of an elephant and a leonine figure.

Garbha-griha: shrine proper; *sanctum sanctorum*.

Ghana-dvāra: false door.

Gopura: a gateway with a tower above for a temple, palace or city.

Grīvā: 'neck'; it is an architectural member below a *śikhara*s or spire of the temple.

Hāra: 'garland'; a row of miniature shrines or shrine-representations over each terrace occupying the position of a parapet. The miniature shrines consists of *kūṭas* (shrine on a square or circular plan), *śālās* (shrine on oblong plan), and *pañjaras* (shrine on apsidal plan).

Jāli: perforated or honeycombed pattern.

Kalaśa: wide-mouthed stone, brick or metal pitcher used as the crowning member of a temple. The fixing up of a *kalaśa* constitutes the last ceremony for the consecration of a temple, either newly-built or renovated.

Kapota: overhanging cornice.

Kūṭas: a shrine on square or circular plan with a pyramidal or conical roof pinnacled by one *stūpī*.

Kūttambalam: a Malayalam term for an edifice within a temple-complex where dance, music and other recitals take place.

Liṅga : Śiva is generally represented in this aniconic form. In Kerala, Bhagavatī is often represented in a similar fashion.

Liṅga-pīṭha : pedestal on which a *liṅga* is placed.

Mahā-maṇḍapa : a hall, closed or open, in front of the *ardha-maṇḍapa* or *antarāla*.

Nālambalam : a Malayalam term; also called *chuttambalam* which literally means cloister around the ambulatory. According to Malayalam architectural tradition, it is one of the five *prākāras* or enclosures, the innermost of them being the outer wall of the *sāndhāra* shrine proper.

Namaskāra-maṇḍapa: also called *archanā-maṇḍapa*. Intended for congregation, it is detached from the temple and is square on plan with a pyramidal roof.

Nirandhāra: temple without any circumambulatory passage inside.

Pañjara: miniature shrine on an apsidal plan.

Pradakshiṇā-patha: circumambulatory path.

Prākāra: enclosure wall.

Praṇāla: water-chute or the projecting gargoyle-like spout for letting out the *abhisheka* (lustral) water.

Śālās : a shrine on oblong plan, with a barrel-vaulted roof crowned by a series of *stūpīs*.

Sāndhāra: a shrine with circumambulatory passage inside.

Śikhara: spire or roof of a temple.

Śrī-kovil: the temple proper in Kerala tradition.

Stūpī: finial; the uppermost member of a temple or *gopura*.

Śuka-nāsā: 'parrot's beak or nose'; architecturally, it denotes a projection from the main roof or *śikhara* over the hall in front of the sanctum.

Teppakkuḷam: temple-tank where floating festival of a deity takes place.

Upapīṭha: sub-basement; an additional member below the *adhishṭhāna*, with mouldings often similar to those of the *adhishṭhāna*.

Vaḷiambalam: a Malayalam term; in Sanskrit it is called *sabhā*. Practically, the front part of the *nālambalam* is the *sabhā*.

Viḷakkumāḍam: a Malayalam term meaning literally 'lamp-house'. It is a structure next to *nālambalam* and is generally fixed with row of lamps.

Vimāna: an entire temple from *adhishṭhāna* to *stūpī*; used generally to denote south Indian temples.

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